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Rhetoric of professional correspondence: origins of contemporary practice

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Rhetoric of professional correspondence: Origins of contemporary practice

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

In conjunction with the increased interest in rhetorical studies, and as a result of recent research surveys which cite the centrality of letter writing in professional communication, letter writing has been receiving increased scholarly attention. A significant portion of this attention consists of complaints about the current state of textbook instruction in business correspondence. For example, Sam Dragga argues that the traditional attention to classification of letters and teaching the characteristics of those classifications allows writers to avoid addressing the "complexity of specific rhetorical situations" (1-3). Elizabeth Tebeaux argues that today's business communication texts "bear the effects of the decay of rhetoric in business correspondence between 1568 and 1640 . . ." (95). She cites the shift to utilitarian model letter books (variously called manuals, handbooks, or formularies) as the reason for the "demise of rhetorical influence on epistolography," and contends that modern texts treat business correspondence in much the same manner as the formularies (95). Mary and Michael Moran, in their extensive study of articles written on the business letter, lament the focus on style, structure, and tone and the:

> surprisingly consistent and redundant body of practical advice that amounts to a kind of folk wisdom based on tradition and blind faith rather than on research. These principles include such platitudes as personalizing letters by putting the writer's personality in them; avoiding cliches and business jargon; . . . using the 'you attitude' . . . being brief and cutting to the point . . . [etc.]. (Moran and Moran 315)

What do these complaints have in common? They identify current practices grounded in rhetorical tradition as insufficient for letter-writing instruction today. Such criticism seems to indicate that we have inherited very little from our ancestor's attention to letter writing and practice. Or is it that we have undervalued and often poorly understood the rhetoric of correspondence we have inherited?

What Have we Inherited from our Ancestors?

If we examine the often over-looked epistolographic tradition in antiquity and its legacy in the 20th century, it is true that we can identify: an inclination to classify letters; an interest in praxis; and a focus on style which consists primarily of traditional advice about personalizing letters, seeking clarity, and using the "you

attitude." But are such features indications of rhetorical "decay"?

Classification

The customary penchant for classifying letters is an enduring inheritance from Greek and Roman rhetoricians like Demetrius and Libanius who felt that the letters written by the "exemplars of rhetorical skills" should be grouped according to the social functions they served so that they might be more easily described in terms of the rhetorical features they illustrated (Stowers 56). And modern scholars who study letter collections continue the practical practice of attempting to find a taxonomy which will enable them to discuss like and unlike features. As Giles Constable points out in his discussion of "Letters and Letter Collections," strict demarcations between letter types are "hard to sustain," but a flexible perception of general qualities within each type makes analysis possible (23). Modern critics who charge that the concept of classifying letters would allow writers to avoid addressing the "complexity of specific rhetorical situations" (Dragga 1-2) fail to understand the flexibility in composition the "types" were intended to allow. They also diminish the principles by which the ancients classified letters and specified types according to the "complex interrelationship

between rhetorical theory, literary tradition, moral philosophy, and the practice of letter writing" (Stowers 49).

Ancient descriptions of letter types, like their modern-day counterparts, provided the "fundamental generic logic" that could be used as an ideal. It was expected, however, that the writer would make rhetorical decisions--elaborating, combining, and adapting according to his/her purpose and rhetorical abilities (Stowers 56). For example, the earliest classifications of letters by types can be found in the handbooks under the pseudonyms of Demetrius and Libanius. Stowers explains that these two handbooks' classifications of letters lack clear definitions of *topoi* (commonplace topics and subjects of discussion); rather, the essential elements that belong to the types are sets of features that "combine to outline a characteristic or recurrent social situation" (Stowers 54). In other words, Demetrius' twenty-one "types" of letters and Libanius' forty-one "styles" of letters are classified according to the reader-writer relationship; and the authors clearly realized that in practice writers would be making rhetorical decisions, mixing and combining types. Libanius even provides the "mixed letter" as a type. Although both authors provide brief discussions of ideal

types for letters, and Demetrius provides a sample letter for each of his types, Libanius does not provide model letters. Instead, he offers "nuggets of reasoning, often in the form of a rhetorical syllogism (*enthymeme*), which gives the gist of the kind of letter" (Stowers 53).

Even in the Middle Ages, when there were highly prescriptive rules for form and style of different types of letters, and the formularies might offer fifty different letter "types," apparently the theoretical notion of a generic epistolary form offered writers considerable versatility. Examinations of letters from the period indicate that "many writers continued to disregard the rules and to choose the epistolary form precisely on account of its freedom and flexibility" (Constable 23).

It should also be remembered that the business letter was born in the manger of an ancient oral tradition which admonished mindful consideration of audience, purpose, and context in determining the content, arrangement, and style of a speech, and the classification of letters retained those same rhetorical considerations. Rhetoric in its traditional context meant the kind of discourse that is exemplified in persuasive speech--"political speeches, legal persuasion in court, religious sermons, commercial advertising, etc." (Kinneavy 20). If we define business

correspondence in terms of its historical connection to rhetoric and if we assign rhetoric the persuasive meaning it had in the "trilogy of the traditional liberal arts of grammar (literature), rhetoric, and logic" (Kinneavy 20), we can see how some of the earliest classifications of letters were also intended to assist writers by drawing parallels to the three "species" of rhetoric: judicial, deliberative, and epideictic. The relationship between types of letters and rhetoric's species had its limitations, of course. The accusing and apologetic letter fell under judicial rhetoric, but most other types were described in terms of epideictic rhetoric, "the rhetoric of praise and blame for customary occasions" (Stowers 51-52). Unfortunately, epideictic was the most neglected in theory and in handbooks and it became the "catch-all category for every type of rhetoric which did not fit into judicial or deliberative" (Stowers 51). Despite the limitations of rhetorical classifications, the types of letters followed rhetoric's method of classifying according to different social contexts.

The method of classifying letters according to their contexts and the social relationships within those contexts (e.g., the writer-reader relationship) is thus a logical extension of the social/contextual approach used widely in

the oral rhetorical tradition. And the selection of material from these types necessitated some kind of rhetorical process for designing the message based on the writer's purpose and perception of the reader-writer relationship within a social context.

An interest in practice

The roots of our proclivity toward practicality in letter-writing instruction is well represented in the origins of the middle ages formularies. While it is true that few formularies provided much, if anything, in the way of theoretical discussion, surely their longevity should be evidence of some redeeming value. From the middle ages formularies to the "how to" model books and computer programs on today's bookstore shelves, practitioners of the art of letter writing have apparently been successful in meeting the needs of a sizable audience. At any rate, singling out the model letters books as the "demise of rhetorical influence on epistolography" denigrates the historical significance of imitation in education and the historical prominence of example "ideal" letters as pedagogical tools in logic, literature, and philosophy. It also sweeps aside the cultural necessity from which the formularies grew and ignores the fact that rhetorical theory has always been "a combination of what actually

happened in practice and what the rhetoricians thought ought to be the case" (Stowers 51).

Let us briefly examine the historical precedent of using example letters to illustrate the "ideal" in form and content, and the cultural necessity for wide-spread instruction in letter-writing which contributed to the development of the formularies and our inheritance of an interest in practice.

The "ideal" letter in education It is significant that letter-writing, as a child of rhetoric, was nurtured by the humanities. Even though the dictamen's close connection to the study of law emphasized its practical nature, the ars dictaminis never completely separated from literary study so the letter as an example of the ideal in form and content was a frequent tool for education. Fictitious letters from antiquity, probably written as progymnastic exercises in the secondary stage of education (with the grammaticus as teacher), indicate that letter writing, like most other instruction, was taught by imitation rather than from theory and rules. In fact, most of the extant Medieval correspondence has been preserved for us because they were written as models for subsequent writers (Wolff 4). Haskin argues that many student letters in the Medieval period were prepared using prescribed

schemes of organization: "for the ordinary man the writing of a letter meant, not the composition of an original epistle of his own, but the laborious copying of a letter of some one else, *altered where necessary to suit the new conditions* [my emphasis]. . . . " (Haskins 205). Hildebrandt speculates the emphasis on imitating a letter's organization in letter writing instruction may be because organization would be easier to teach and evaluate than logic or proofs.

Letters also served as the ancestoral model of form for other genres. Siegel writes that "the development of Italian poetry . . . and the prose of Dante and his contemporaries" were modeled on the dictamen (208). Kennedy also sees many of the works which included discussions of dictamen in terms of style as precursors to the Renaissance development of literary criticism (189).

It is also clear that letters served as an important tool for philosophical pedagogy. Stowers explains that "the letter was one of the most characteristic means of expression for ancient philosophy" (38). It was common for the letter to provide "living models of characters who embodied philosophical doctrines" that students could imitate and that instructors could use as examples of the "ideal" in content as well as form (Stowers 38). The

letters of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and others were often referred to in epistolary texts in order to make particular points about appropriate form and/or content for letters. This common practice of using example letters or portions of letters of course provided an historical context for the acceptance of the formularies by the public who would want to model their own writing on the exemplars of what "ought" to be.

Even if we dismiss the importance of imitation of sample "ideal" letters in pedagogy, it would be unreasonable to dismiss the significance of the formularies in filling a void in theoretical attention to letters that arose during the middle ages.

Cultural necessity At a time when the ability to read and write was rare, people skilled in letter writing were in great demand at every level of the society. The collections of sample documents "for every conceivable occasion" could be copied or imitated by those not trained in the dictamen (or rhetoric) as "the art of letter-writing began to filter down the social ladder" (Richardson 20). The need for letter-writing instruction increased as governmental and ecclesiastical communication needs increased and as the necessity for economic record-keeping and personal business communication grew in the middle

ages. At the same time the need for letter-writing instruction was increasing, theoretical treatment of letters decreased. Why?

It is likely the increasing specialization of business needs, the separation of aesthetic or "literary" letters as an area of study, and the growth in the branch of legal communication (the ars notaria) all contributed to the decreased status of correspondence as a topic of theoretical study. It is true it would become increasingly difficult to provide a comprehensive theory that would accommodate the dictamen's pluralistic nature, but there was also a tension between theory and practice (philosophy and rhetoric) in university instruction that contributed to the lack of interest in business correspondence instruction at the university level. In English universities during the 14th century, for example, the art of letter-writing was taught in "noncredit courses." As Malcolm Richardson points out, although the letter-writing skills students would need in their daily business lives could not be learned in the theologically-oriented university classroom, rhetoric classes where letter-writing was taught were generally looked down upon by university officials (20). Richardson highlights the continuing theory-practice tension when he describes the practical formularies as

representative of the "cheapening of the ideals of the early dictamen theorists" ("The Dictamen" 209). Interestingly enough, it was the notion that rhetorical instruction (which included epistolary instruction) "cheapened" philosophical instruction that led to the abandonment of epistolary theory at the university level and led, therefore, to the less-educated general public's subsequent reliance on "cheap" formularies. According to Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, after 1300 letter writing would no longer be a university subject in most of Europe (430).

The interest in and desire for letter-writing instruction did not decrease, however, and the increasing need for epistolary training for most of the public from the late middle ages until the twentieth century was generally met by formularies or handbooks/manuals written by professional practitioners of the art rather than university "masters." Although some dictatores were no doubt trained in rhetoric at universities, at least before 1300, Richardson indicates that many professional "scriveners" were trained as apprentices, frequently under "the auspices of the church and later in scrivener's guilds" (20). And these practically-trained dictatores were more concerned about providing models for the

application of their art to specific situations than explicating a general theory of letter writing. Although they clearly did not follow ancient theorists' advice against writing about "technical" subjects in letters, there is evidence that the dictatores followed early theoretical guidelines on style and form/arrangement for the dictamen closely. The uniformity of style in the sample letters is an indication that professional letter-writers were expected to maintain a "rigid standard unknown today" (Richardson, "Early History," 21). The form of the letter, particularly the attention to the format of salutations in sample letters, was intended to enable the writer to maintain the "cultivated manner" theorists advised and to give honor appropriate to the recipient and thereby "promote favor." The format, then, was a rhetorical decision based on the writer-reader relationship. The appropriate expression of ethos in the introduction was an important rhetorical consideration given the hierarchical nature of the society (Baldwin 220).

The collections of model letters by dictatores not only responded to the increasing necessity for practical advice on public and private correspondence by providing guidelines and models for subsequent writers, but also may have played an important part in another practical concern-

-the spread of literacy. Richardson argues that by providing guidelines and models for subsequent writers, letter collections may have also played an important part in the spread of literacy. He sees the proliferation of correspondence in English playing a pivotal role in the development of modern Standard English, the spread of literacy, and the standardization of English spelling ("Business Writing").

So we return to our original question: Are the formularies responsible for the "rhetorical decay" in epistolary instruction? It seems more reasonable to say the formularies represented the practitioners' best efforts to apply the theorists' ideals to specific situations in order to provide practical advice in the form of models for subsequent writers of private and public correspondence. As with the classification of letters into types, clearly the preparation of the formularies involved rhetorical decisions in order to select the "ideal" in form and content. In addition, the actual use of the formularies by trained or untrained writers would necessitate rhetorical decisions. The student would be required to select an example from the manual, or more often assemble a letter from examples existing in the manual, based on the writer's purpose and the reader-writer relationship. Therefore, as

with the ancient practice of providing letter writers with taxonomies of letters, we can only consider our inheritance of the formularies' practice of providing sample real letters that illustrated what "ought to be" as a degenerative disease if we ignore that selecting the material from the model books necessitated rhetorical decisions based on the writer-reader relationship and the particular occasion for writing.

Focus on style

In addition to the classification of letters and the attention to praxis, it is true that an equally common trait of our epistolary inheritance is found in the attention to style, tone, and correctness--admonitions on form that Moran and Moran categorize as "folk wisdom."

As Moran and Moran point out, this traditional body of advice most frequently focuses on the "personalization" of letters and emphasizes the "you attitude" as revealed in the style, tone, and correctness of the letter. It is also true our legacy of wisdom from the earliest epistolary theorists, "folks" like Demetrius, and Erasmus, and from twentieth-century textbook authors like Gardner, Hotchkiss, and Cody, is surprisingly consistent. But I'm not convinced the negative connotation of "folk wisdom" is a fair expression of this inheritance. The "identity" of our

epistolary inheritance may be a more important consideration than the lack of great change in our approach to instruction if we wish to learn the "whole truth" about our rhetorical inheritance in letter-writing instruction. Perhaps our ancestors' wisdom consists of a "consistent and redundant body of practical advice" because their advice provides a sound rhetoric of business correspondence which has been flexible enough to meet the exigencies of various discourse communities for centuries.

Our Primary Inheritance

If we thoughtfully examine our traditional lore, we can see that what we have inherited from our ancestors is a careful attention to the rhetorical triangle in business correspondence instruction. Consider the most oft repeated "platitudes" of our inheritance in terms of the rhetorical triangle: "personalize your letters" amounts to urging writers to establish their ethos; advice to use the "you attitude" asks writers to develop pathos; and the interrelated style points--messages to avoid jargon, be brief, be accurate, (the "Five Cs"), etc., reminds writers that the logos must be expressed clearly and appropriately with the audience's needs in mind. A clearer understanding of how the irrevocably interwoven ethos-pathos-logos (writer-reader-message) relationship has historically been

expressed in correspondence instruction might help us appreciate the rhetoric we have inherited.

"Careful" conversation

Our current embodiment of that relationship was first expressed in the twentieth century by the first business communication textbooks to address the "new science" of letter writing. It is my intention to examine the expression of this rhetorical inheritance as it is revealed in select texts from the early twentieth century. Texts from 1904 to 1938 by Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss expressed, through the "you-attitude" and the "Five Cs," a similar notion of the writer-reader-message relationship that the ancient theorists expressed. That similar notion, the "identity" (or the genetic code for correspondence if we extend our metaphor of inheritance), is the notion of correspondence as a conversation, and more specifically, a conversation which must be carefully expressed.

Because letter-writing was conceived in terms of a dialogue, the relationship between ethos/writer and pathos/reader was, and continues to be, emphasized in epistolary instruction. It is the nature of the writer-reader relationship that has driven the expression of the logos in terms of classification of letter types, samples

of "ideal" model letters, and the attention to style, tone and arrangement.

Before I examine how the "you-attitude" writer-reader relationship is expressed in the "Five-C" treatment of the logos in the twentieth-century texts, however, I believe it would be helpful to explain how the writer-reader relationship evolved before the twentieth century. Briefly tracing how the writer-reader relationship was perceived by the earliest epistolographic theorists and how they described the treatment of the message in terms of that writer-reader perception should provide a sense of the historical precedent, a context for reading the modern expression of the reader-writer-material relationship in Cody, Hotchkiss, and Gardner's texts.

This delineation should also stress the "whole truth" about letter-writing instruction by taking both change (in emphasis) and identity (in the enduring notion of letters as conversation) into consideration. Tracing the legacy of epistolographic theory and practice to its beginnings will reveal that the twentieth-century embodiment of the writer-reader-material relationship, seen in the "you attitude" and the "Five C's," has been significantly influenced by letter-writing's birth in the cradle of rhetoric.

In Chapter II, I will, therefore, examine one of the earliest works on classical epistolographic theory, On Style. I've selected On Style to illustrate the expression of the relationship among the writer, reader, and material during classical times because this text is significant as the earliest extant Greek treatment of letter writing and because the author establishes the conversation-based traditions that we see reiterated into the present time. G. M. A. Grube in his introduction to his translation of On Style argues that the principles expressed in this work are "found reflected in all later theorists on epistolography" (29).

I will then explain how the reader-writer relationship subtly shifted from the philosphical to the practical in the letter writing guidelines which emerged in medieval dictamen. The Principles of Letter-Writing (1135) is representative of the common medieval approach to letter writing instruction, an approach that emphasized form and arrangement of the logos as a means for achieving goodwill in order to persuade. An explication of this work should highlight how epistolary instruction subtly shifted in emphasis from the writer's purpose to provide friendly, philosophical instruction to a well-known audience during classical times to the more business-oriented purpose to

persuade a variety of potential readers through the courtesy of a carefully organized message.

Finally, I will briefly describe the impact of humanism on epistolography during the Renaissance. In general, epistolary scholars agree that the rhetorical form of the modern business letter evolved from a meshing of the medieval ars dictaminis and humanist epistolary theory (Henderson 331-332). The best known and by far the most influential of the humanist epistolary handbooks was Erasmus's De conscribendis epistolis. References to this work will demonstrate the ancestral roots of the twentieth-century textbook's analysis of the "nature, character, and moods" of the reader, and represent the transition to the "modern" concept of instruction in letter-writing as a process to engage the reader in the conversation. Erasmus meshes the standards humanists valued (a less stilted style and form and the recommendations to follow classical models such as Cicero) with the medieval need for flexibility in addressing the ever-increasing variety of letter-writing situations (retaining the ars dictandi emphasis on the parts of the letter and the emphasis on the salutation and the introduction to enhance the conversational nature of the letter). Erasmus's process approach to letter-writing instruction should give us an interesting historical

context for the twentieth-century analysis of the "psychology" of human nature in order to enhance the conversational nature of the letter.

In Chapter III, I will examine how the "modern" conversation of letters is explained in texts by three of the most influential writers of early twentieth century business correspondence textbooks: Sherwin Cody, Edward Hall Gardner, and George Burton Hotchkiss. These authors have been cited by scholars as the "pioneers" of current business communication concepts, specifically for introducing a reader-based notion of the writer-reader relationship in the "you-attitude" and for introducing a reader-based attention to the material in the "Five Cs."

It should be apparent that Cody, Hotchkiss, and Gardner's explication of the "new science" of correspondence echoes the historical proclivity to combine traditional rhetorical theory and socially-current practice as they pass on the legacy of letters as carefully constructed dialogues.

CHAPTER II. EVOLUTION OF THE DIALOGUE

The Classical Period

Not surprisingly, letters in classical times were seen as the lasting expression of oral communication. In practice, most letters were dictated and often served as a letter of introduction for the messenger. When theorists turned their attention to letter-writing, they brought with them a view of the rhetorical ideal in oral delivery and a model of the "ideal" in the content and style of letters collected from master rhetoricians.

The birth of letter-writing instruction

On Style illustrates the classical perception of the epistolary ideal at the birth of letter-writing instruction: letters as a friendly dialogue and letter-writing instruction as a focus on the proper content and form of that dialogue. Attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum or Pseudo Demetrius, On Style was probably written in Alexandria in the second or first century B.C.E. Grube takes the author's references to Aristotle, Demosthenes, and Theophrastus and Demetrius' general critical stance as evidence for dating the treatise about 270 B.C.E. The treatment of letters is only one section of this "textbook," but it is the earliest extant treatment of letter-writing and is, therefore, significant as a symbol

of the birth of letters as a subject worthy of theoretical attention.

It is helpful to begin the discussion of the nature of the writer-reader relationship during the classical period with an understanding that the theoretical treatment of letter writing at this time centered not only on how the letter was to be written, but on what was acceptable content for a letter. Classical epistolary theorists were concerned with establishing what letter writing was to be in order to establish it as a distinct form of discourse, apart from oral delivery, and to distinguish the ideal or "authentic" letter from the "ordinary" letter (White 190). In making these distinctions about what is the appropriate form and content of the epistolary message, Demetrius explains that the letter is a lasting "gift" of dialogue which reveals the "image" of the sender's character. It should also express the writer's friendly intent, and this friendly relationship should be "carefully" expressed in the conversational plain style.

Dialogue as an "image" of one's character

Demetrius defines what letters should be in terms of the sender's character or ethos and likens the letter to a dialogue:

> The letter, like the dialogue, should be very much in character. You might say that everyone draws, in his letters, an image of his personality. [The 1927 translation of On Style by W. Rhys Roberts translates this line more poetically to read: "It may be said that everybody reveals his own soul in his letters."] A writer's character may be seen in all his works, but nowhere so clearly as in his letters. (iv. 227, 1961)

This may be the most famous statement ever made about letters. One reason for the preparation of letters during the classical period "was the opportunity which they gave to the writer or his friends to present his character and opinions to the world" (Morris 79). Historical studies indicate that the increasing popularity of collecting letters corresponded to the culture's tendency to value the personal, "self-revelatory tone" in letters.

The "gift" of "careful" dialogue

The seeds of the twentieth century admonitions about clearness, conciseness, completeness, correctness, and courtesy (the Five Cs) may be seen in Demetrius' discussion of the stylistic treatment of the dialogue in letters.

In classical times the logos was seen as a "gift"--a message which would teach the ideal; and the letter would be seen as the embodiment of the "good man." Letters by "master rhetoricians" provided "not only models of epistolary style and form but also a theoretical basis for the cultivation of the art of letter-writing" (Constable 32). Demetrius does not provide model letters, but he uses frequent literary references to master rhetoricians to support the theoretical concept of the letter as "one side of a dialogue."

Demetrius begins his discussion of the epistolary style by referring to Artemon as the editor of Aristotle's letters who says that "letters and dialogues should be written in the same way, for a letter is like one side of a dialogue" (iv. 223). Demetrius agrees but goes on to say that this "is not the whole story. A letter should be written rather more carefully than dialogue, though not obviously so. Dialogue imitates impromptu conversation, whereas a letter is a piece of writing and is sent to someone as a kind of gift" (iv. 224). However, "talking" in letters did not include imitating dialogue. The imitation of conversation in letters is inappropriate because "this imitative manner as a whole is more suited to oral delivery" (iv. 226, 1961). The "gift" of written

conversation could not be corrected and so deserved more careful attention than "impromptu conversation." For example, Demetrius explains that disjointed sentences are "out of place in letters" because they are obscure and couldn't be corrected for lucidity as one could in an oral conversation.

In addition, the notion of letters as "gifts" addresses an interesting aspect of the reader-writer relationship during the period. In antiquity the recipient was considered to own the text, a fact which had "important implications . . . not only for the character of epistolary collections [it was assumed the letter(s) would be saved and likely shared] . . . but also for the text of a letter, which might be revised by the recipient" who would have "proprietary right" to the correspondence (Constable 16). It is, therefore, understandable that Demetrius would advise writers to pay "careful" attention to the presentation of the message through the letter's style, and the content of the message. As lasting evidence of "honor and favor to the recipient" (Constable 16), the form and content of the "gift" would be important considerations. The "careful" treatment of the dialogue's content and form would be important aspects of the notion of letters as a token of friendship as well.

The dialogue as an expression of friendship

Demetrius addresses epistolary content in terms of the writer's friendly intent and ties the author's purpose to the "exposition" of the message:

> A letter is designed to be the heart's good wishes in brief; it is the exposition of a simple subject in simple terms. [The 1961 text translates the line as "a brief expression of one's friendly feelings . . . ."] (iv. 231)

The "expression of one's friendly feelings" exemplifies the Greek concept of the "sharing of selves," which was similar to the Roman concept of friendship. This "sharing" was an important part of the writer's ethos. The "simple subject" refers to the appropriate topics for the ideal friendly letter, and "simple terms" is a reference to the plain style for letters, the significance of which I will explain in a moment.

I'd like to point out first that although the emphasis is clearly on the importance of the letter as an expression of the writer's ethos, the identification of the letter as one side of a dialogue also implies the necessity to consider how the letter will be perceived by the reader. This brings us to the classical perception of the audience as illustrated by Demetrius' continued discussion of the

treatment of the message in terms of the writer's friendly intent.

The language of "cultivated" friendship

Early epistolary theorists regarded the "cultivated manner" of communicating for the purpose of "maintaining family or friendly ties" as the "authentic form" of letters. Cicero, who frequently commented on letter writing, expressed this apparent ideal/ordinary dichotomy by distinguishing letters which express the author's mood from those which are occasioned by necessity. Demetrius seems to be making a similar distinction. For Demetrius, the ideal letter was one written to express friendly feelings.

The emphasis on friendly feelings would seem to indicate that classical theory addressed only personal letters. However, before we too quickly assume a strict dichotomy between personal and business letters, we need to consider the nature of "business" life at the time. John White, Loyola University, examined letter collections for a decade, and he concluded that eventually the language of "cultivated friendship" in Greek personal letters came to influence the language of diplomatic or "official" correspondence (192). Other scholars agree that there was no real distinction between "private" and "business" life

at the time because politics and dynastic marriages made virtually everything "business" (see Richardson and Stowers).

Be that as it may, in the discussion of stylistic elements which follows Demetrius always relates the writer's syntactical and lexical choices to the "cultivated" friendship between the writer-reader, and he allows for flexibility within the bounds of that friendship. He writes that there should be "a certain degree of freedom in the structure of a letter" because "laboured letter-writing is not merely absurd; it does not even obey the laws of friendship . . . " (iv. 229). Grube's 1961 translation describes the structure as "loose" (a term applied to syntax) and "friendly" and explains that it would be "ridiculous" to construct periods because then one would be writing a forensic speech which is "not even friendly, or, as the saying goes, one should call a spade a spade to one's friends" (iv. 229).

Apparently, an aspect of the "laws of friendship" also dictated that "authentic" letters were not to be expressly didactic though they were viewed as vehicles for subtle philosophical instruction. Discussions of "logic or natural science" are inappropriate subjects for this friendly conversation, as are didactic topics that could

become "a treatise instead of a letter" or a lecture or sermon, because then you would not be "chatting with a friend in a letter, but preaching" (iv. 232, 1961).

"Friendly advice" is allowed in this "familiar talk" in the form of metaphors, similes, and proverbs. Demetrius encourages their use as long as they are "subtle" because they would appeal to, and thereby instruct the reader, without being expressly didactic. It would, in other words, maintain the "familiar talk" and friendly writer-reader relationship the classical period saw as appropriate in the "ideal" letter:

> Ornament, however it may have in the shape of friendly bits of kindly advice, mixed with a good few proverbs. This last is the only philosophy admissible in it--the proverb being the wisdom of a people, the wisdom of the world. But the man who utters sententious maxims and exhortations seems to be no longer talking familiarly in a letter but to be speaking from the pulpit. (iv. 232)

The 1961 translation expresses the view that proverbs are the only "wisdom" a letter should contain because "the beauty of a letter lies in the expression of affection and courtesy, and also in a frequent use of old saws and

proverbs" (iv. 232). The expression of affection is obviously an aspect of the emphasis on the friendly nature of writing, but the reference to courtesy also highlights the potential hierarchical relations between writer and reader, obviously a relationship common in business writing and a rhetorical concern that would receive considerable attention during the middle ages.

The importance of the plain style The plain style has considerable significance in terms of the conversational nature of letters and also as the appropriate means by which one can subtly instruct without giving a "lecture" or making an "oratorical display." The levels of style in letter writing were originally used to classify the various types of oratory, and D'Alton's description of oratory's plain style is appropriate to Demetrius' discussion: "The language employed by the oratory of the Plain Style was akin to the speech of everyday life" (D'Alton 70); that is, it was simple and unadorned. Halloran and Whitburn describe the plain style as a "verbal register, the most subtle and quiet one . . . of which a person ranged in the effort to move an audience" (63). The classical emphasis on style, then, should also be seen as an aspect of appeal to an audience. In this respect, Demetrius' description of what is the appropriate

form of letters is similar to Cicero's view of the plain style's function. The Ciceronian plain style's specific function was to instruct people, and Demetrius' use of the plain style himself would seem to indicate he shared Cicero's view of the pedagogical function of the plain style.

The qualities of the plain style Demetrius discusses the subject matter, diction, and composition of the plain style and warns against the arid style which is described in terms of inappropriate diction or composition. For example, narrating "a great event" in trivial terms, or using detached clauses or abrupt endings which are inappropriate or "affected" so that the composition "tries to disguise the licence of the thought" would show an aridity of style and would be inappropriate for the conversational expression of the logos (iv. 238-239).

Demetrius identifies the special qualities of the plain style as clearness (lucidity), vividness, naturalness, and persuasiveness. All of these qualities--clarity/clearness and a simple, natural style which serves to persuade the reader--would be important aspects of our inheritance from the classical period's treatment of the conversation in letters.

In closing, Demetrius makes a brief addition to his previous discussion of the plain or simple style for letters. In so doing he addresses the potential hierarchical relations between writer and reader in terms of how the dialogue may be expressed. Demetrius acknowledges that the expression, dependent on the intended audience, may be a "mixture" of two styles: "In general, the style of a letter should be a mixture of two styles, the elegant and the plain" (iv. 235). The 1927 edition translates this as a "compound" of two styles, "the graceful and the plain." This addition acknowledges that there are circumstances when one should "adjust" the style of the "talk" for the intended recipient, an attention to audience analysis considerations that seems absent in the generally ethos-centered discussion of the writer's character and friendly intent:

> Letters are at times written to cities and kings; these should be somewhat more distinguished in style. One must adjust them to the personage to whom they are addressed. (iv. 234)

The 1927 edition translates it thus: "It is right to have regard to the person to whom the letter is addressed." Demetrius cautions, however, that even in the case of heightened tone for "States or royal personages" such

letters must not become a treatise instead of a letter; and he once again refers to Aristotle and Plato to make his point. A writer's decision to "heighten" the tone, then, was a decision based on the writer-reader relationship, but even the "elegant" or "graceful" style was to be within the "subtle bounds" appropriate to letters.

It is understandable that subsequent epistolary writers would focus on style since the tone, the diction, and the very arrangement of the message were important to the author's purpose to "carefully" construct a "cultivated" friendship in the conversational style.

The Middle Ages

The classical discussion of the "heightening" of style in terms of the recipient's position in the society was also a precursor to the attention to salutations seen in epistolary instruction during the middle ages. The middle ages is significant as a period of time when letter writing began to subtly shift from its oral and philosophical roots to become a practical tool of business. Instruction in letter-writing would follow practice and subtly shift its emphasis to practice as well. The attention to appropriate subjects for "authentic" letters would disappear in the face of increasing situations for letters. However, the notion of letters as a "friendly" dialogue can still be

seen in the attention to salutations, though the "friendly" purpose took a decidedly more persuasive turn. By the high middle ages the increase in diverse business interests would expand the notion of audience, and the hierarchical nature of the society would be expressed in the systematic attention to appropriate salutations.

The Principles of Letter Writing (Principles)

Principles (1135) is representative of the common medieval secular approach to business correspondence instruction. Although the author of Principles is not known, James J. Murphy speculates that he was probably a teacher in Bologna, and the form indicates that Principles "may represent a schematic summary designed to be amplified by a teacher in a classroom" (Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts 4). Bizzell and Herzberg call Principles "typical" of the period because it reflects the middle ages' emphasis on the systematic treatment of the form and arrangement of the logos as a means for the author to establish ethos and thus achieve goodwill in order to persuade. Principles also illustrates the blurring of the line between private and commercial correspondence that was occurring during this period. More importantly, Principles demonstrates that the classical notion of letters as conversation is the tenet which guides the systematic treatment of the material.

Principles contains thirteen sections. It examines the parts of the letter in what is apparently a standardized format in order to "provide some form of introduction to those untrained in this art" so that they might write in the "approved" mode (7). The "approved" mode is a direct inheritance from the monasteries. As commerce grew, feudal governments formed, and canonical and civil laws increased, much of the practical concern in the church at the time was with state official business and requests. Theological scholars, trained in rhetoric, applied classical learning to "the problem" of defining the role and usage of letters for the church's business purposes (Richardson "The Dictamen" 208). Their classical learning influenced the focus on the parts of the letter as extensions of the parts of speech, and their practical commercial needs influenced the focus on "apt" writing, particularly an opening which would make the reader "attentive, docile, and well-disposed" (Bizzell and Herzberg 430). Influenced by the church, form/arrangement and style in order to elicit goodwill became the focus of secular instruction in letter-writing as well.

Principles exemplifies the following important interrelated features of the medieval perception of the reader-writer relationship. The letter is to convey "the

sentiments" of the sender in a given situation (and situations other than "friendly" circumstances are addressed); the letter is to give honor and praise appropriate to the circumstances; and elicit goodwill so that the writer's purpose is fulfilled.

"Sentiments" of the sender

The emphasis on arrangement and the importance of the author's intent is clear in the Principles' definition of a letter which, like On Style, defines the letter as dialogue and focuses on the sender:

> An epistle or letter, then, is a suitable arrangement of words set forth to express the intended meaning of its sender. Or in other words, a letter is a discourse composed of coherent yet distinct parts signifying fully the sentiments of its sender. (III. 7)

This definition, although not referring to the "soul" or "character" of the writer, is similar to Demetrius' definition which also placed the emphasis on the writer. The writer's message gains increased importance since the "discourse" in "distinct parts" must express the sender's meaning clearly. The reference to "coherent" addresses the necessity for a clear message the intended reader could easily understand.

Principles states that the syntax of a letter "must by all means be made harmonious and clear, that is, like a flowing current" (7). The first of the Five Cs, clearness, is explained in terms of an attention to audience which clearly assumes a broader audience for the discourse of the sender than the classical perception of a letter written to one who is well known. The author of Principles explains that he uses the terms "approved and basic" because "the words of the writer might reach even the least educated or the most ignorant persons . . ." (6). The "careful" attention to the discourse is most evident in the giving of honor and praise. It is in the greeting that the "friendly" nature of the discourse is addressed.

Giving honor and praise

The longest section in Principles is concerned with the salutation or greeting which consisted of set phrases established according to the social rank of the intended recipient. In "What the Salutation Is" (V. 7) the author defines the salutation as "an expression of greeting conveying a friendly sentiment not inconsistent with the social rank of the persons involved" (7).

The aspect of friendship so important in ancient epistolary instruction is still present, and the issue of giving honor and praise appropriate to the circumstances is

equally important to that "friendly" greeting that must be adapted for different readers. As George Kennedy explains, the attention to "social rank" would be a significant aspect of letter writing throughout the Middle Ages (Kennedy 209). Hildebrandt writes that "some of the six dispositio canons were dropped by writers of the Medieval and the Renaissance world. Not so the exordium [salutation]. Vocabulary differences occur, but beneath variant headings is still discussed the prime purpose: adapting the written material to the reader, be he of the church business, or government" (10-11). The attention to the opening of the Medieval letter can only be appreciated in terms of the crucial importance of honor in Greco-Roman society. Needless to say, we still try to "honor and praise" the absent partners of our discourse by correctly addressing them. The Medieval exordium/salutatio is our business letter salutation and opening paragraph today, which, of course, is still adapted to the reader in order to engage the reader in the discourse to follow.

Principles divides salutations into three types: "prescribed, subscribed or circumscribed" (7-8), and these three types are based on where the name appears in the greeting (prescribed, the name is written first; subscribed, the name is placed at the end; circumscribed,

the name of the recipient is written in several places). The order of the salutation indicated the social hierarchy of the sender-receiver relationship and would therefore be important in engaging the reader in the conversation. "What Should be Included in a Salutation" discusses how the recipient's "renown and good character" can be emphasized and how additions can be made to "indicate humility and certainly not pride," so the salutation is also an aspect of the ethos of the sender (8-10).

This section also describes the three-step process for addressing the audience. The author advises that the "letter-writer (dictator)" must first consider the audience in terms of number and "rank"; secondly, the "kind of subject must be considered"; next, the writer "should know what is fitting to be attached to the names of the persons involved . . . so that their rank may be indicated by the sequence of the writing itself" (10). The balance of the section (10-16) then discusses the "fitting" form of a greeting to give honor and praise from and to clergymen, noblemen, princes, close friends, teachers, pupils, parents and sons (there is no mention of daughters); in short, apparently every common reader-writer relationship is anticipated and the appropriate order and content of the greeting is enunciated.

Friendly intent

The "friendly" greeting is frequently a part of these formulaic salutations, no doubt a shadow of the classical view of the ideal letter which was to be a dialogue between friends. For example, "The Emperor's Salutations to All Men" includes: "N--, august emperor of the Romans by the grace of God, expresses friendship and good wishes to . . ." (12). Other greetings include phrases such as "friendship which is deserved by worthiness" or "expresses a feeling of brotherly affections" or "greetings and warm affection."

Part V. closes with "Another Consideration" which addresses the persuasive nature of securing goodwill: "it is a custom to take the material of the salutation from the name of the recipient in such a way that we urge him to greater good-will" (16); and the author offers several examples of plays on the names of recipients. (For example, Benedictus means "grace of God" so phrases using "divine grace" would be part of the salutation (16).)

Eliciting goodwill to persuade

The securing of goodwill (*benevolentiae captatio*) in a letter is defined in persuasive terms. The "goodwill" relationship between the writer-reader in this discourse is achieved through: "a certain fit ordering of words

effectively influencing the mind of the recipient" (17). Principles includes a far greater range of potential audiences and purposes for the "discourse" of letters than the "heart's good wishes in brief" described by Demetrius.

Principles explains the five ways goodwill may be secured: "from the person sending the letter, or from the person receiving it, or by both at once, or from the effect of circumstances, or from the matter at hand" (17). This is clearly an expression of the rhetorical triangle; and ethos, pathos, and logos seem to be equally important aspects of goodwill. The humility of the sender, the praises of the recipient, and the effect of circumstances are all considered in relation to securing goodwill. The balance of the section systematically addresses how and where in each of the five ways goodwill be secured and considers the receptiveness of the audience. The discussion of a "combative letter" to enemies or opponents, and the consideration of whether or not the matter at hand is "honorable" or not is reminiscent of Aristotle's analysis of audience (pathos) in Rhetoric, Book I.

In part X (20), under the heading "Concerning the Shortening of a Letter," the author describes which of the five parts can be eliminated. The narration is to be presented "in such a way that the materials seem to present

themselves . . . for the advantage of the sender's cause" (18) so presumably the length could be adjusted to the situation. Surprisingly, given the lengthy discussion of salutation one would suspect that it could not be eliminated, but the author writes that the salutation is sometimes removed "to declare the scorn or anger or passion of an indignant mind" (20). Or it may be "sometimes left unsaid out of fear." By removing the salutation, the author could thus affect the reader reception to the "talk" to follow by what was left unsaid. As would be expected, the author writes that if the salutation is removed, the securing of goodwill should also be removed, "since they are contiguous and mutually connected" (20).

Decisions about "the order in which the parts themselves can be moved about" are dependent on securing the reader's attention: ". . . the beginning should be the Securing of Goodwill, so that when the attention of the recipient is secured in this part he will be more favorably inclined to understand the rest of the letter" (21). The order not only reinforces a fundamental rhetorical goal to secure goodwill, but it also enhances the conversational nature of the letter by guiding the reader through the letter.

Principles enunciates the era's perception of the reader-writer relationship in an increasingly commercial period. Epistolary instruction, a child of oral rhetoric, grew to its "golden age" during the middle ages. Both the works of monks, "the most ardent practitioners of the art" (Constable 37), and works such as Principles by secular writers shared the need to engage the reader in the conversation by securing goodwill through the appropriate friendly salutation and by carefully organizing the prose so the reader would "attend to the sentiments" of the writer. The writer was also to consider the subject matter, the circumstances which necessitated the communication, and the honor of the recipient when considering form and arrangement so that the letter would both express the writer's sentiments and persuade the reader. It is the element of persuasion which most strongly influenced the reader-writer relationship and the subsequent expression of the "conversation" in the modern adaptation of epistolary instruction in twentieth century business communication texts.

I discussed in Chapter I how the formularies (collections of model letters) took the place of theoretical attention to business correspondence in the high middle ages. Model books would continue to be the

most common form of instruction until the twentieth century texts once again began to provide some theoretical guidance to the preparation of letters, but there was a brief resurgence in theoretical attention to letters during the Renaissance that also impacted our modern concept of letter-writing instruction as the humanists provided advice to temper the medieval formalization of the "careful" dialogue.

The Renaissance

In many ways the Renaissance was a transitional period for letter-writing instruction. The late middle ages and early Renaissance were marked by a "tendency towards a personalization of style and contents . . . paralleled by a tendency, which was in some respects contradictory, towards formalization . . ." (Constable 34). Renaissance handbooks frequently combined the medieval formalized attention to friendly greetings we saw in Principles with the emphasis on polite behavior in the courtly tradition of the Renaissance.

The "how-to-be-and-do" books which arose from that mix had an influence on the expression of the conversational style in business correspondence as well as private correspondence. Mohan R. Limaye explains how middle class

business correspondence came to imitate the style of the courtly etiquette model letters:

> The gentlemanly quality of courtesy, which was an honorable part of the knightly code, trickled down to the 'business' and semi-private correspondence of the middle classes as well. This whole period . . . was full of handbooks of improvement. The middle classes, however, adopted polite courtesy in their letter writing . . . as a practical aid to get results, to get favors granted. (19)

As I explained in Chapter I, letter-writing instruction and the actual practice of letter-writing were increasingly the work of professional letter-writers by the high middle ages, and although the dictamen was capable of "great subtlety and grace," letters by dictatores frequently did not have the personalized nature Renaissance humanists valued (see Dickson).

Humanists showed a renewed interest in classical rhetoric; and, as we saw in On Style, classic rhetoricians saw the "ideal" letter as a very personalized dialogue between friends. Humanists adopted the classical tradition which conceived of the epistle as a personal oration which only differed from a speech in "the external mechanics of

its salutation, valediction, and subscription (the date and place where it was written)" (Dickson 12). Some scholars also cite the "rediscovery" of Cicero's letters and the renewed interest in collecting letters as important contributions to a "backlash" against the formalization of letters. The result generally was that "the personalization of style and contents emerged as an ideal . . ." as it had been in classical times (Constable 41). However, the humanists also recognized the necessity to address a more varied audience than envisioned by the classical rhetoricians.

The personalization of letters

While formularies by professional practitioners of the art continued to meet practical needs for instruction in specialized areas, the humanists brought the variety of letter types, and the personal quality of the classical age to their treatises on letters. Certainly the humanists brought a higher level of learning and "latinity" to letter-writing and letter-writing instruction than the medieval dictatores who had begun to provide models of letters in the vernacular--a practice humanists would not approve of until the sixteenth century. In the long run, however, the personalization of style and contents which humanists touted as the ideal would remain and "later

combine with the vernacular to mark the emergence of the modern type of letter" (Constable 41).

Erasmus's epistolary handbook, De conscribendis (1499) is generally mentioned by scholars as the most thorough and influential of the epistolary handbooks during the Renaissance. Dickson states that the 1522 edition was "the most influential of the treatises on letter writing . . . [It was] taught in Tudor grammar schools and later abridged by other authors to serve as the basis of their own letter-writing manuals" (Dickson 12). It is representative of the humanist protests against letter writers who use a formulaic approach to letters.

Erasmus's discussion of letters allows us to join the practical ars dictaminis's focus on form, arrangement, and multiple audiences with the classical definition of the letter as a personalized conversation. Erasmus's treatises on letter-writing, as well as his own letters, also provided a common sense view of letters which balanced the excessive imitation of "Ciceronian Latinity" seen in other early humanist manuals and the "Senecan curtness both in style and structure" reflected in the second generation of humanist letter-writing manuals (see Dickson). As Michael Mendelson (1993) points out, Erasmus achieved this balance

by using the classical notion of letters as a friendly dialogue. Erasmus writes:

> I think that I cannot define it [the genre] more concisely than by saying that a letter should resemble a conversation between friends. (20)

Erasmus recognizes, however, as the medieval dictatores did, that the treatment of the material is subject to the endless purposes of letters; and Erasmus allows for the adjustment of the dialogue based on the particular audience and the situation for writing. He states that style must be flexible, varying with the reader, the subject, and the occasion (13-15) and uses a rather dramatic contrast to illustrate his point:

> One will not adopt the same style when addressing learned and important persons on issues of war and peace as he would in giving instructions to a servant about sousing salt fish or cooking vegetables. (Erasmus 15)

The extensive listing of potential readers and the "new formulas for greeting" he provides are reminiscent of the attention to salutations we saw in the middle ages, but Erasmus notes that "There is something particularly attractive in being called by one's proper name" (51). Personal reference in his own sample letters exhibit what

Erasmus sees as the appropriate way to engage the "absent partner"--a friendly, personal greeting and the use of personal pronouns abound in his own letters he offers as models.

Careful dialogue revisited

Just as Demetrius urged writers to write in a style which was familiar to the reader, and Principles admonished the writer to make the sentences "harmonious and clear," Erasmus addresses the careful treatment of the logos in order to maintain a conversational tone. Much like twentieth-century texts which advise modern students to avoid business jargon, Erasmus objects to obsolete or officious language which would not be in keeping with the conversational style of correspondence.

He also, like Demetrius, sees the author's ethos as an important part of the conversational nature of the letter. In fact, Erasmus reminds students to "keep in mind the writer and not merely the recipient or the purpose for which (the letter) is sent" (19). He states that the writer can adopt a style in keeping with his "individual temperament" (12), but the writer's style should still be adaptable to the particular situation:

> Though the style you choose may be the best possible in most cases, it cannot be the best in

> every one; in my opinion the best form of expression is that which is most appropriate to the context. (Erasmus 12)

Tebeaux speculates that this is an attack on the Neoclassicists who "slavishly" imitated even Cicero's good advice on brevity and simplicity (78). At every point Erasmus tries to keep prescriptions to a minimum, demanding the writer "seek order" based on capturing the "reader's attention" in order to engage the reader in the conversation (65-67).

Despite the admonitions against imitation, Erasmus devotes most of his handbook to model letters, but only after noting that writers shouldn't feel a "kind of bondage" to any organizational pattern or style:

> Rather, they should first consider very carefully the topics on which they have decided to write, then be well acquainted with the nature, character, and moods of the person to whom the letter is being written and their own standing with him in favour, influence, or services rendered. From the accurate examination of all these things they should derive, so to speak, the living model of the letter. After that has been determined, I shall allow them to search out

> passages in the authors from which they can borrow a plentiful supply of the best words and sentiments. All of these must be adapted with appropriate changes to suit the topic . . . so that it appears not to have been borrowed from other sources, but to be original with ourselves. (74)

We shall see that the advice on knowing the audience's "nature, character, and mood" is remarkably similar to the advice the early twentieth-century authors gave to letter writers interested in engaging the reader's interest by using the language with which the reader would be most familiar.

Tebeaux argues that Erasmus "reshaped the letter as (a) a utilitarian instrument, rather than a fixed model or a rhetorical display of beauty and (b) a flexible medium that should be responsive to audience, purpose, and context" (Tebeaux 79). I believe the middle ages had already established the utilitarian quality of letter-writing, and the medieval attention to salutations and the author's "sentiments" indicate a flexible recognition of audience, purpose, and context, but Erasmus did provide common sense guidelines which linked the process of writing with the product that was produced.

Significantly, the key to that process is the conversational relationship between the writer and reader, which can only be determined by assessing "the individual character of each person . . . through careful observation" (Erasmus 75). As we will see, Erasmus's discussion of the "nature, character, and moods" of the reader in order to enhance the conversational nature of the letter is similar to the process of psychological assessment of the reader advocated in Cody's 1904 text, How to Deal With Human Nature in Business. As Malcolm Richardson points out, most modern business writers would separate the "personality" they put in their business letters and their private letters, but Medieval and Renaissance people saw "no contradiction between their public and private selves. For them, their 'real' self was largely determined by their social role . . . and their behavior at all times was expected to be in accord with what was demanded of people in that role" ("First Century" 25). What modern readers see as an odd mix of formality in style and informality in form and content would not bother the reader of the period who would expect the courtesy of formal conversation coupled with informal, personal information. Stereotyping people by their occupation would not bother anyone at the time because a person's occupation was considered "a

reliable index to character" (Richardson " First Century" 25). We shall see that the early twentieth-century texts rely a great deal on the traditional concept that a person's occupation is a guide to their personality--and a key to the language which will engage him or her in the dialogue.

Post-Renaissance to the Twentieth Century

The letters of Cicero and Seneca continued to be taught in the grammar schools at least throughout the sixteenth century, so it is difficult to generalize about letter-writing practice after Erasmus. Donald Dickson argues that the letter-writing handbooks after 1600 were no longer part of the tradition of authors who offered introductory treatises "on the aims and methods of epistolography" (Dickson 19). Dickson also claims that letter-writers moved away from the "Erasmian tradition" after the beginning of the seventeenth century, when letter-writing guides "seemed chosen and arranged as much for entertainment as for instruction" (Dickson 19-20). Letter collections seem to indicate many writers followed the "courtesy literature" of the post-Renaissance or the social conduct/etiquette manuals which were particularly popular from 1850-1900 (see Denton).

Only a detailed analysis of actual letters from the Renaissance to the twentieth century would prove that the rhetorical notion of letters as "careful" conversation did not disappear from practice even if theoretical guidance was absent. Archival research of letters and/or model books from the Renaissance to the twentieth century would substantiate that the rhetorical principles I have been discussing were retained in the letters themselves. Such research is beyond the scope of this essay, but I am making a hypothetical argument that the conversational nature of letters was, in fact, retained in the letters themselves, despite the lack of theoretical attention.

However, excerpts from a few letters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the introductions to the twentieth-century texts I will be examining in the next chapter, indicate that the interpretation of conversational style in letters varied considerably. Writers were often influenced by the "gentlemanly quality of courtesy" which was frequently as formal and stilted as the culture of the day. Many would argue that the set phrases of politeness were expected by readers; others complained that they were too formulaic to be perceived as friendly. The twentieth-century textbooks by Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss would

take the latter view and describe courtesy in terms of the kind of "original" approach Erasmus intended.

1700s

William Rivers' analysis of Lord Chesterfield's letter to his son (December 19, 1751) provides evidence that the seeds of the focus on clarity and correctness, the careful treatment of the logos in order to engage the reader in the dialogue, and an awareness of audience were retained by at least some who gave letter-writing advice after Erasmus and before the twentieth-century textbooks. Chesterfield offers the same practical advice we see in modern textbooks: a focus on clarity and an awareness of audience needs. Lord Chesterfield writes:

> My Dear Friend:
>
> You are now entered upon a scene of business . . . care and attention must be joined to it. The first thing necessary in writing letters of business is extreme clearness and perspicuity; every paragraph should be so clear and unambiguous, that the dullest fellow in the world may not be able to mistake it, nor obliged to read it twice in order to understand it. (qtd. in Rivers 7)

Such advice continues to echo the focus on the clear treatment of the logos in terms of the writer-reader relationship. Chesterfield's letter is not unlike the Medieval advice that the message "clearly" express the sender's meaning, "like a flowing current" (Principles 7) or the Medieval author's reminder that "the words of the writer might reach even the least educated or the most ignorant persons" (Principles 6). We shall also see that Chesterfield hints at an important feature of the twentieth-century textbook's advice--the element of time and business.

Model Books

As I explained in Chapter 1, the model books replaced theoretical attention to letters after the Renaissance; and few books offered the introductory treatises on letter-writing's "aims and methods" (Dickson 19). In the absence of theoretical or textbook attention to letters, model letter books were in abundance. Katharine Hornbeak lists 239 titles in her bibliography of model letter books from 1560 to 1800; and Harry Weiss lists 416 titles in his "Preliminary Check List" of American model letter books from 1698 to 1943. The model books did, as I've explained, fulfill an important role in providing examples from which experienced and inexperienced writers could draw. The

examples themselves no doubt passed on the inherited characteristics critics have identified as "folk wisdom," but I think it can be fairly said that just as every person is never quite the same, letters, too, in practice would demonstrate the endless variety of individual people selecting material for individual purposes. As George Saintsbury wrote in his introduction to A Letter Book, a collection of 18th century letters, diversity is evident in every collection of letters even in a century of "rule and class":

> Now as letters--that is to say letters that deserve to exist at all--are bound to reproduce the personality of their writers, it will follow that a refreshing diversity must also belong to them. And as a matter of fact this will be found to be the case. Even the eighteenth century--the century of rule and class, of objection to 'the streaks of the tulip,' of machine-made verse, etc.,--has, except in the case of letters artificially made to pattern, shown this signally. (Saintsbury 98)

Saintsbury's introduction highlights the danger of generalizing that business letters in a four hundred year

span were all "artificially made to pattern" simply because model books were the predominate instructional tool.

1800s

Likewise, any generalizations about the "stilted" style of nineteenth century business writing is also "open to attack from all quarters" (Douglas 125). George Douglas explains that the "conditions of business and social life" were changing very rapidly, and his analysis of "typical" business letters from the period indicates that the "patina of gentility" a rising businessman might try to acquire often conflicted with the directness "and even abruptness" in style of the "energetic pragmatists" of the period (Douglas 127-129). Douglas argues that the directness of the age made the "nineteenth century businessman wary of all forms of phony politeness and refinement" (127). Despite Douglas's evidence that the age encouraged clarity and simplicity in writing, the instructors who turned their attention to creating textbooks for business writing instruction in the early twentieth century believed that too often business letters had been hampered by "stilted" language and phrases "made to pattern."

Like the Renaissance, the turn of the century, 1900-1920, was notable as a time of transition. In addition to the temptation to make a letter "by pattern," the growth in

new technology threatened the "personal" notion of letters at the same time that numerous businesses wanted letters to "do the work of the personal visitor" (Cody, 1911, 18) for the burgeoning mail-order business. Douglas cites the typewriter, carbon paper, increasing urbanization, the growth of large corporations, and the sheer volume of correspondence as contributing factors to the change in perceptions of business writing. The typewriter, particularly, would impact the view of writing as "unique and personal." Douglas argues that leaving letters to secretaries to write as corporations became increasingly bureaucratized toward the end of the nineteenth century "downgraded the importance of writing" and reinforced the trend toward standardization of letters (131).

In response to the technological changes and the bureaucratization of business, Sherwin Cody, Edward Gardner, and George Hotchkiss wrote the first texts to address the "new science" of business correspondence for the twentieth century. In their books the 1800s focus on the writer/the business shifted to a "new" awareness of the importance of personalizing letters for particular audiences. For Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss the reader truly became the focal point of the business letter when the "you" viewpoint became the central emphasis and

persuasion the central goal in letter-writing instruction for the burgeoning use of letters in sales. As with the theoretical works from the centuries preceding them, we will see that the reader-writer relationship still drives the treatment of the message in these twentieth century texts; and for the first time, women are assumed to be one of the potential conversational partners. The identity of letters as a carefully constructed conversation, as the "personal visitor" of the business and the personal voice of the writer, would be offered to a new generation of business student preparing to enter the twentieth century business community.

CHAPTER III: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY BUSINESS TEXTBOOK

An enunciation of Sherwin Cody, Edward Gardner, and George Hotchkiss's basic principles of good business writing not only demonstrates a continuation of a lengthy tradition of letters as a conversation which is carefully constructed, but also, I believe, gives those principles a new sense of validity. William Rivers wrote that a message from the past can have a "freshness and impact" unparalleled by modern expressions of the same ideas (3). I believe that statement is particularly appropriate to the sensitivity to audience concerns Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss demonstrate in their texts. This chapter will analyze Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss's enduring contributions to the tradition of letters as conversation through their explanation of the "you-attitude" and their refinement of how that conversation should be, as Demetrius first explained, more "carefully" constructed than oral conversation. Let me begin, however, by providing a background for these authors and the texts we will be examining.

Background to Texts

As I explained in Chapter I, Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss have been cited as the "pioneers" of modern business communication textbooks. Francis Weeks notes that

"little has been done in researching the history of any aspect of business writing in this century" (212). Although studies of textbooks and other publications in the twentieth century are limited, research by Carter Daniel, David Carrell, Melissa Powell, and Francis Weeks indicates that Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss's texts made significant contributions to business communication education.

Sherwin Cody (1868-1959) is most frequently remembered as "the sponsor of the longest-running ad of all time: 'Do You Make These Mistakes in English?'" and for his phenomenally successful mail-order instruction courses (Daniel 3). In the middle of "an age of purists, he advocated flexibility and common sense" based primarily on the needs of the reader (Daniel 12). The author of over 120 business books and numerous works of fiction, Cody established his principles of good business writing based on his own extensive and varied experience in sales and marketing. He saw writing as a persuasive process based on a thorough knowledge of human nature. His earliest works were concerned with "etiquette--the outward appearance and social acceptance of workers in a business setting" (Daniel 13). However, Cody recognized a void in business letter instruction and his texts, How to Deal With Human Nature in Business (Human Nature), copyright 1904, and Success in

Letter Writing (Success); copyright 1906, were the first to turn the focus in content and style from the writer to the needs of the people who read the letters. Both texts went through numerous editions and were ground-breaking efforts in business communication and the use of the "new science" of psychology to analyze audience (see Daniel and Powell).

Success was particularly influential in its rebellion against the stilted tone Cody saw in the business correspondence of the 1800s, what researcher Carter Daniel calls the "'your-esteemed-favor-of-the-sixteenth-ult.-duly-t-hand' style which had dominated commercial correspondence since the mid-nineteenth century" (10). It is quite possible such "formalities of ornateness" were used by unskilled writers who would, "naturally gravitate toward language which already had the ring of respect about it, the official stamp of approval, the feel of ironclad forms and rose-scented propriety" (Daniel 133). I've already mentioned that business writing from 1850 to 1900 was also likely influenced by the social conduct/etiquette manuals which were highly popular during the period. At any rate, not unlike Erasmus or Demetrius before him, Cody saw "stilted" language as inappropriate to the letter's conversational nature; and he viewed the "friendly," personal letter, achieved through the conversational

(plain) style, as the "ideal" form which would engage the reader. By the 1930s, when Cody's text was in its 24th printing, "the conversational style had become the norm, and Sherwin Cody could rightly consider himself one of the principal reasons" (Daniel 10).

His text is also the first treatise on direct mail selling (Daniel 10). By the 1930s, he was cited as one of the nation's leading authorities on selling by mail (Ramsay 153). Using the letter as a tool for mass selling was in its infancy in 1900, and the principles Cody advocated have changed little since then. Cody was also the first to recognize that the appeal to human nature is far more significant in letter writing than the formal correctness which was emphasized in the 1800s model books. His text takes a commonsense approach toward grammar, viewing grammar as subordinate to considerations of content and style based on the reader's needs. Cody's own experience selling his books and his interest in business letter writing also led to his role as an authority on the subject of broader education in business. By 1916, he was blaming American business schools for focusing on matters of stenography and bookkeeping, rather than administration. He "formed a significant part of the movement that transformed the old 'commercial science' into modern

business administration" in the business curriculum of the nations' schools (Daniel 11).

We can see the influence of Cody's emphasis on the reader and the need for a conversational style in Edward Gardner's text, Effective Business Letters (1915). Francis Weeks credits Gardner with writing the first college-level text that focused solely on business writing (212). Universities in the early 1900s began to offer business courses in response to growing demands from students and the business community. According to Weeks, the first courses in business writing were offered at Illinois in 1902 and New York University in 1906, but Weeks speculates the earliest courses were based on rhetoric handbooks which "emphasized primarily the form and mechanics of the business letter" (209). There were books, like Cody's, that were advertised as suitable for college-level courses, but it is unknown where (or if) they were used in college classes. We know that Illinois adopted Gardner's text when it was published; and we know it was supplanted by George Hotchkiss's text in 1916 (Weeks 212).

According to Francis Weeks, George Hotchkiss, a graduate of Yale University, taught Rhetoric at Beloit College from 1906 to 1908. From 1908 to 1911 he taught English at New York University. He became a Professor of

Business English at the New York University School of Commerce, Accounts, and Finance, later moving into Marketing and becoming Head of the Marketing Department. Weeks writes that Hotchkiss earned a reputation in both salesmanship and marketing. In 1909 he published a twelve-volume home-study series called Business English (Weeks 202). It was as Professor of the New York University School of Commerce, Accounts, and Finance that he developed a revised, college-level textbook based on his successful home-study series. Business English, Principles and Practice (1916) was written with co-author Celia Ann Drew, Ph.B., who is identified on the title page as an instructor in English in Julia Richman High School in New York. As Weeks explains, it would not be unusual for college and high school instructors to collaborate since frequently high school books were used in college-level courses. Weeks argues that "the level of instruction in the high schools was pretty high by our current standards" (203). Commercial high schools were also fairly common in the early 1900s in response to society's demand for employees who had some technical training in business (and only the best students were likely to go to college). In addition, instructors moved from teaching high schools to universities freely.

Hotchkiss generally gets credit for attaching the name "you attitude" to the reader-adaptation theory Cody's and Gardner's texts introduced (Powell 39). (The term is present in his 1921 text, and the 1921 text contains the first reference to the "Five Cs" by that name.)

Business English, Principles and Practice was immensely popular, going through numerous printings. It was revised in 1921 with Hotchkiss identified as the Chairman, Department of Advertising and Marketing, New York University. This revised edition was co-written with Edward Jones Kilduff, M. A., Chairman, Department of Business English, New York University. This text, too, went through numerous printings and editions through the 1930s. The introduction to the 1935 third edition states that this is a "complete revision of what is probably the most successful textbook ever published for college and university classes in business writing." The success and popularity of Hotchkiss's books helped establish him as an authority on business writing. Significantly, despite the "completely revised" pronouncements, the underlying principles remained the same. The illustrative material and the practical problems taken from actual files of businesses were new in the revised edition, but Hotchkiss and his co-authors from 1916 through the 1930s saw letters

as their ancestors have consistently seen them--as carefully constructed conversations, the content and style of which were dictated by the needs of the intended reader.

Common Features

In Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss the Five Cs and the "you attitude" were first introduced as reader-based principles which could guide all letter writing, erasing some of the formulaic barriers that arose between the different types of letters. These texts, as we will see, were only "ground-breaking" in their modern expression of the continued tradition of epistolary instruction's focus on the letter as a carefully constructed dialogue that began centuries before with Demetrius. It would be far too monumental a task to analyze every feature of these texts, but I will examine Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss's emphasis on three irrevocably interwoven features:

* the persuasive intent of letters,
* the "you attitude," and
* the friendly, conversational style of letters achieved through the Five Cs.

All these features are driven by the writer-reader relationship; and it is these features which we have most clearly inherited from our turn-of-the-century ancestors.

As I stated earlier, I will discuss how each writer envisioned these features in the hope that an enunciation of their basic principles of good business writing will give a new sense of validity to our contemporary explications of the "careful" dialogue in business letters.

Sherwin Cody

Cody writes in the preface to Success (1906) that the current letter books on the market failed to teach the "new art" of "dealing with human nature by mail," the essential ingredient of which is the ability to "talk fluently and correctly on paper, and make people do what one desires by the words one writes" (Cody x). The Medieval persuasive intent of letters we saw in Principles is particularly present in Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss's texts. These letters took the position that all letters were, in effect, sales letters and this attitude, of course, influenced their explication of the careful conversation. To "talk fluently" on paper, the student needed to know human nature; and to talk "correctly" the student needed to carefully construct the "talk" in terms of the reader. Let's begin by analyzing Cody's discussion of the "you-attitude" in terms of knowing human nature. And then I will examine how Cody described the construction of the letter in terms of the writer-reader relationship.

The "you-attitude" means knowing human nature

Cody argues that "letters should be written in simple, effective English, which will produce the same effect on the reader as personal conversation" (22). In order to achieve this conversational personal effect, Cody advises the writer to "become a student of human nature as revealed in letters, and . . . learn to write one kind of letter to one kind of person, and another kind of letter to another kind of person" (22-23). In order to adjust one's letter to the intended recipient Cody admonishes the student to "know the man to whom you write . . from top to toe" (56).

Like Demetrius, the unknown author of Principles, and Erasmus, Cody also saw the letter as an expression of the author's character. In replying to a letter, Cody explains that a good way to form an idea of the recipient is to examine the writer's letter, including the handwriting, to "form some idea of the writer from the character of this letter" (57).

But how was the writer to really "know" customers from whom he had never received a letter or never met? Cody describes "knowing" customers as a process of imagining the absent partner in the conversation. This imaginative process was part visualization of the absent partner and

part "striking an average" based on knowledge of the "class" of person being addressed.

Visualizing the absent partner Cody writes that the writer must "have imagination, so that he can see in his mind's eye the person he is addressing . . ." (28). Later in the text, he expands on this notion of imagination as a means of successfully "moving" people through the business letter. The writer must:

> see the effect with his inward eye, the eye of imagination. As it takes a man of imagination to move people through a poem or a novel, so it takes a man of imagination to deal successfully with people in doing business by letter. (122)

In Human Nature Cody further explains the "imaginative" approach of visualizing the intended receiver and first advises the use of personal pronouns to achieve the "easy talking manner" he sees as essential in achieving the "personal touch" so crucial in using words to "make people do things."

Though Cody never uses the term "you-attitude," the seeds for the attitude that asks the writer to conceive of the letter with the reader's needs in mind are clearly presented here. He urges the writer to get in the habit of visualizing the customer, actually closing ones eyes and

feeling "his presence" (175). Cody describes the result of this imaginative visualization in terms of a personal conversation with the reader, one in which the writer will be speaking in the "easy talking manner" that the recipient would want to hear:

> Then alone [when you've visualized the reader's presence] can you write as you would talk to him . . . . When you begin to get this imagination you will show in your letters the confidential, personal tone, the easy talking manner. You become really personal. You speak to your customer as 'you' and refer to yourself as 'we' or 'I.' You begin to feel that confidential talky tone in your letters. You don't put 'scenery' (conventional sales-talk) into your letters, because if you can see your man you know he doesn't care for this. You give him what he wants, not a purely imaginary and theoretical line of 'letter-talk.' (175-176)

The echoes of this early advice can be seen in at least one contemporary text which focuses on audience awareness. Paul Anderson suggests in Business Communication: An Audience-Centered Approach (1989) that a student employ a similar kind of "visualization" technique

to help students "talk" with their readers that Cody and Hotchkiss recommended:

> imagine yourself sitting down with a member of your audience. Then imagine the phrasing you would use to make yourself clear to that person. Listen for the places where the person asks, 'What do you mean|' And remember what you say when you reply, 'What I really mean is . . .' The phrasing you use to complete that sentence is the phrasing to incorporate in your communication. (Anderson 42)

The visualization technique has survived in our "folk wisdom" because it leads to a clear, direct expression of the writer's ideas with the particular audience's needs in mind.

Classes Like his ancestors before him, Cody differentiates between an oral conversation and the written conversation in letters. That too, is an inherited trait we have retained. Anderson, for example, is careful to differentiate the conversational style in letters from oral conversation. Anderson writes, "this advice doesn't mean that you should necessarily write the way you talk. Many occasions at work require a more formal style than people use in conversation" (42).

However, unlike a real conversation, Cody notes that the letter must leave a quick impression while working "more or less in the dark" (30). So in addition to visualization, Cody advises students to study human nature to identify "classes." Comparing this process to the good salesperson who studies individuals he meets to find what appeals to them, Cody urges writers to "know" their readers by studying "classes" and "mak[ing] the class appeal as personal as possible," just as they would if they were talking to the client personally (126). Cody argues that by appealing to human nature within these classes, the letter will read "as if written exclusively for each person who receives it" (127). That personalized intent, of course, echoes the humanist concern for letters which would be "original with ourselves" (Erasmus 74).

Without a letter from the recipient, Cody advises that one should:

> judge the person from his general knowledge of the class to which he most probably belongs. In any case, the character of the person to whom the letter is sent wholly determines the form of the letter, and even what is to be said [because] knowledge of the reader is the first requirement of all composition . . . . (57)

Human Nature begins with a discussion of "certain broad national characteristics," knowledge of which could assist the writer in appealing to the character of the intended recipient. He makes observations about Americans from different parts of the country that are remarkably similar to our current stereotyped perceptions (see Locker 18-19). For example, he writes that the "East is more conservative, more permanent, slower to respond, more reflective . . ."; and the "Pacific Coast has a characteristic daring mingled with a liking for the gay and bizarre. Striking and dashing appeals have a little better chance there" (3). In what may be the first recognition of international audience awareness, an area contemporary texts could do well to address, Cody also discusses dealing in business with the English, French, Spanish, Germans, Italians, and Japanese. Again, stereotypes abound. He describes the English as "influenced by patriotic reasons in their business" and are willing to pay more for a lesser product if it is made in England (4). Of the Germans he writes: "the Germans have bad manners and an aggressive business enterprise found in no other European people. They are patient, far-sighted, scientific, and exceedingly hard workers" (5). Consider his observations about doing business with the Japanese:

> The Japanese are a shrewd, thrifty, hardworking people. It is perhaps impossible for an American to understand the workings of their oriental mind; but since they model their business on American accomplishments, and all the leading business men in Japan read, write, and speak English, the American would best treat the Japanese as he would his own people. (6)

Obviously, such stereotypic views continue to exist today, even if they are not "overtly stated or as consciously held" (Carrell 467).

Gender scripts The views of "national characteristics" were not the only stereotypes Cody offered in his "analysis" of audience. Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss would also provide gender scripts that would be "perpetuated by the professional writing textbooks . . . through the 1950s . . ." (Carrell 467). In Success Cody cites gender as a primary factor in determining how to appeal to classes within the larger context of geographic region. It is the first time correspondence instruction would include women in the conversation.

If writing to a woman, Cody advises the student to make the conversational appeal to the senses. Cody explains that the conversation to a woman must be

simplified and devoid of logical argument. "You may argue with a man; you must show a woman. . . the whole feeling and atmosphere of the proposal are usually more important than the arguments. Indeed, in writing to a woman it is well to suppress argument, or simplify it down to the point required in writing to a child" (127). Apparently, Cody viewed women in much the same light as he did Italians who he described as "characteristically passionate when suddenly roused, and more childlike in their nature" (6). Apparently Cody was voicing the mainstream societal view of women as creatures governed by their emotions, a perception that has not, unfortunately, altogether disappeared.

In Human Nature Cody also highlights the necessity of writing a different conversation to women. In this text he devotes eight pages to "How to Do Business With a Woman" and provides sample letters to illustrate their emotional appeal. Cody acknowledges that "probably more than half the business done in this country is done for women, or at the instance of women, or in some way because women wish it . . . " (148). He notes that "much depends on the class of women one is trying to reach," but Cody states that the suggestions which follow apply to the "average woman" (147). Cody advises writers to be "scrupulously, formally polite" when writing to women and to pay particular

attention to the appearance of the letter because "women believe in dress, and stationery is the dress of a letter" (147). As noted in Success, the conversation addressed to women should be simply and plainly said, appealing to the senses or the emotions, but never using argument. He also implies that not only are women impressed by form rather than content, they are unable or unwilling to make independent judgments. He states that women are primarily influenced by "what everybody believes" and by "offers of something for nothing" and he offers a sample letter to illustrate his point.

Although it is tempting to dismiss these gender scripts as mere reflections of the commonly accepted stereotypes of the era, one has to wonder how the propagation of such stereotypes in business textbooks for decades influenced both male and female students. Certainly women students who saw themselves as emotional children wouldn't imagine themselves in authority positions; and what male student trained by these gender scripts would offer such a frivolous creature a management position?

Cody continues his discussion of audience in terms of developing the style of the conversation. "Real" letters, Cody argues, are "works of art to win a customer and get

his business" (18); and the "fine art" of appealing to readers is developed primarily through practice and observation. Cody does, however, offer some stylistic principles on the careful "construction" of the "talk" on paper.

The Five Cs

As Craig and Carol Kallendorf note, the most striking feature of modern business communication textbooks is their "almost unanimous agreement on one point: the appropriate style for business communication" (35). Certainly we have seen that the style of letters has been the primary concern since the first theoretical treatment of letters by Demetrius. The guiding principles for today's business prose are directly inherited from the twentieth century enunciation of the Five Cs--clearness, correctness, conciseness, completeness, and courtesy. All these features, though not all so named, have been present in epistolary instruction since the first theorists addressed epistolary instruction. Demetrius urged writers to write in a style which was plain and simple, gave advice on length and appropriate figures of speech, and emphasized friendliness as interrelated features of what we could identify as features of the Five Cs. The same could be said of Principles which admonished the writer to make the

sentences "harmonious and clear," urged adjustments in length and in the "fit ordering of words," and particularly emphasized correct form as a matter of courtesy which would elicit goodwill. Erasmus's objections to obsolete language and his encouragement of a flexible style were features of his expression of clearness and the "friendly" courtesy of letters. Although the Five Cs are not all so-termed by Cody, nor set off in a separate section as they will be by Gardner in 1915, Cody addresses each feature at some point in his texts, and the guiding principle behind each of these prose style features was the same principle that has driven the logos since Demetrius--that is, the desire to offer the natural, simple language of conversation as a way to appeal to the reader. Let me explain how Cody's general comments about the Five Cs consistently connects the treatment of the logos to the needs of the reader.

Clearness Clarity, as we have seen in ancient tradition intertwined both with the author's ethos as a credible writer and the appeal to the audience. Cody continues that tradition. Undoubtedly as a rebuttal to the formalized phrases that were common in letters at the turn of the century, Cody implies that the best style was the one that was most inconspicuous, and an inconspicuous, clear style was achieved by "never using in a letter words

you would not use in conversation" (Human Nature 78). Cody argues that a good letter is the one which uses "frank, natural, colloquial statements" which appeal to the reader (Success 93).

Correctness Cody assumed that all business letters should be "strictly grammatical" as a matter of the author's ethos. The "simple graces of rhetoric and a trained style" would show the reader that the business man was a "master of what he professed" (56). But grammar was more a matter of common sense than knowing rules because he assures the student that if he thinks clearly and accurately he will "seldom violate a rule of grammar, no matter whether he knows anything about grammatical rules or not" (177). Cody even describes punctuation in terms of the reader when he writes that punctuation marks are "just to make his [the writer's] meaning clear to a common-sense ordinary person" (177).

Conciseness Conciseness was a matter of brevity and accuracy. The time the intended recipient has to read the letter was the primary factor in determining the length of the letter. The length is first described in terms of adapting the amount of information to the occupation of the intended recipient, which, as in classical and medieval times, was apparently assumed to dictate the personality of

the person as well. Women and farmers have more time, Cody explains, and so could receive and would even require longer letters to be persuaded. "Business men, who receive large amounts of mail, demand that a letter shall look peculiar, shall be out of the ordinary, and not too long" (Cody 128). In fact, Cody argues that the writer must learn to "master condensation." Cody explains in Human Nature that the most significant reason for condensing the letter is to "economize the attention of the reader" (178). Again, knowledge of the reader is of greatest importance. Condensation is described in terms of the interaction between the writer and the reader in Success as well. Condensation may be secured by: omitting details it could be assumed the reader would know, by "suggesting and implying in the choice of words and forms of the sentences as much as possible," and by stating matters "forcibly" so that the reader would be "induced to think out the unspoken details for himself" (58). This description demands an imagined interaction between the writer and the reader in order to construct the letter.

Completeness Despite the emphasis on conciseness, Cody cautions that the writer must not "irritate the reader" by making the letter so brief "it tells only half the story" (128). Completeness was thus also inextricably

linked with the "you" viewpoint. To be complete, the business letter should answer all the questions a reader might have. It also saved money by guaranteeing the company would not need to send additional letters of explanation.

Courtesy Cody argues that more business is spoiled "through lack of good manners than in any other way," and good manners were best acquired by knowing the intended recipient (Human Nature 6). Since most people buy "as they feel," Cody argues, great care must be taken not to offend the intended reader, or "take the chance of tiring" the reader in form, arrangement, or content (Success 130). Probably no other principle stresses the "you" viewpoint as strongly as does the emphasis on courtesy. Cody describes courtesy in terms of the personal adaptation of style in order to be helpful to the reader. He argues that the coldly impersonal letters as well as the "offensively familiar" are inappropriate. Finding the happy medium is a matter of "tact" which he defines as the "nice personal adaptation of the style to the personality of the one addressed" (Human Nature 176-177). The emphasis on courtesy, of course, was an important feature since the middle ages focus on the correct salutation and exordium so as not to offend, but Cody clearly enunciates the reader-

adaptation theory behind such traditional attention to friendly greetings.

Edward Gardner

Although early textbook authors did not acknowledge their sources, Melissa Powell argues that Cody's influence is clearly evident in Edward Gardner's 1915 text, Effective Business Letters. Cody's influence is particularly evident in Gardner's continued emphasis on the reader and the need for a conversational style. Certainly Gardner's text is a more formal (one might say, stiff), systematic treatment of the form and arrangement of letters than is Cody's text. It does, however, continue the tradition of describing letters in terms of carefully constructed conversations. For Gardner, unlike Cody, much of the attention centers on rules to maintain the "dignity" of the conversation on paper. That "dignity" was an aspect of both the writer's ethos and courtesy to the reader.

Gardner, Associate Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin in 1915, wrote in his preface that his book was intended for the business man. However, Francis Weeks writes that when his book was published it was "immediately adopted at Illinois and probably other universities" (212). The revised 1928 edition of Effective Business Letters (copyright 1915), coauthored with Robert

Ray Aruner, Professor of Business Administration, University of Wisconsin, provides additional insight into Gardner's purpose in writing his first text. Gardner, at the J. Walter Thompson Company in 1928, announces that when the first edition of the book appeared, "the problem was to get rid of stilted jargon and to apply maxims which today are accepted as rudimentary" (iii). Gardner's 1915 treatment of the "rudimentary maxims" of correspondence is quite similar to the medieval Principles of Letter-Writing in its systematic approach. Gardner's 1915 preface announces that he intends to "reduce to compact principles" the accumulated experience of "business houses" (iii).

In explaining the "compact principles" from business practice, Gardner emphasizes the importance of letters as the "shuttles that fly back and forth to weave the web of commerce" for the business (2). The basis of that "web" was the opportunity for the letter to be "the personal representative of the house, and be written so well that it would make a friend of the reader" (3).

The writer's ethos/personality seemed to be somewhat subsumed by the business, but the goal was to make the reader feel comfortable with the communication: "the letter can communicate the personality of the house as well as its own subject matter, making the reader feel that the writer

is a man and not a machine" (4). Again, we see that the friendly, personal nature of letters established as the ideal in classical times and invoked again by Erasmus, resurfaces as the ideal at a time when the changes in business technology, particularly the use of the typewriter, threatened the personal notion of letters. Douglas explains how Sears Roebuck & Co. had to hire a special staff of secretaries to "write business letters by hand for those who were suspicious of the typewritten word" (130); but the "threat" to the personal notion of letters is probably more evident in both Gardner and Hotchkiss's perception that the typewriter, coupled with the growth of business, encouraged businessmen to delegate letter-writing to assistants and clerical workers (who were likely to use a "form letter" approach). Those who knew the clients best thus separated themselves from the "written word," and in effect downgraded the importance of writing a letter which reflected the personality of the "house" and appealed to the special needs of the recipient.

Gardner's discussion of the way the writer is to achieve a personalized quality is similar to Cody's discussion of imagination, but with far less detail. Like Cody, Gardner urges the writer to visit the customers to know who they are and how they live, "to study their needs

and form friendships with them" (6). And he acknowledges that to write to people "understandingly requires imagination" (6). Unlike Cody, Gardner doesn't offer any details about how to achieve this "imagination" in the absence of personal knowledge of the recipient.

Gardner's "you" attitude

Gardner instructs the writer to "aim at a 'personal quality'" in terms of the individual's writing style. Gardner relates this personal quality to a cultivated connection to the intended recipient. The writer's style was to "convey an impression of sincerity and of interest in the person addressed" (7). The personal quality could be achieved by "imitating the tone of conversation" (7). For Gardner, the tone was largely a matter of diction; and he supplies the writer with cryptic advice to follow:

> write as cordially and personally as if you were face to face with your correspondent. Avoid formal, set phrases. Use a vocabulary full of interesting words. Employ direct questions. Address the reader as 'you.' (7)

Gardner, like the theorists we've examined since Demetrius, differentiates written and oral conversation. Gardner argues that: "letters must always be more dignified than conversation" (7). In language which is

remarkably similar to Demetrius, Gardner delineates the differences between oral conversation and the "dignified" conversation of letters. Because letters don't have the "aid" of seeing the reader's expression, Gardner warns, they must "avoid overfamiliarity for fear it will be misunderstood. Likewise they must avoid humor, for fear it will be taken for sarcasm" (8). The "dignified" conversation of letters must also be more "compact" and direct than real conversation because there is not the opportunity to correct misunderstandings--one of the major concerns Demetrius addressed in his discussion of the careful composition of the "gift" of letters.

A "voice in the dark"

Because Gardner, like Cody before him and Hotchkiss after him, saw every letter as a potential sales letter, he advises writers to consider the subject/product first when determining the choice of language and appeal, but after the demands of the subject are met, then the writer should be familiar with the needs of the audience in terms of their education, income, and tastes in order to determine "the selection of material, and to a far greater degree its phraseology" (239). As you will recall, Principles urged the letter-writer to first consider the audience in terms of number and "rank" and secondly the "kind of subject must

be considered" (ca. 1135, 433); but both saw the "phraseology" as dependant on the intended recipient(s).

Despite Gardner's repeated references to audience "tastes and needs," he clearly sees the letter's identity in the ancient sense; that is, as an expression of the writer's character. The letter should, in Gardner's words: "convey a pleasant impression of the personality of the writer" (241). The "pleasant impression" is, however, "first of all a matter of showing real and intimate knowledge of the customer's needs and wishes, for we all have a good opinion of the man who is interested in us" (241).

Gardner advises that the style should be direct and personal, speaking of the customers as "you." This personal tone is important because it secures the customer's confidence which Gardner sees as particularly crucial when the customer does not know the writer. Expanding on the impact of the letter as an indication of personality, Gardner also describes the letter in terms of a conversational interaction between the writer and reader:

> a letter is a voice spoken into the dark; when another voice responds, we reassure ourselves by imagining the speaker, and welcome any indication of his personality. (241)

Special cases

Gardner does not provide the detail on appealing to different classes that Cody did or that Hotchkiss will. He does devote a chapter to illustrations of "special cases," and the gender and profession scripts Cody introduced are sustained by Gardner. However, these scripts are always tempered by Gardner's low-key reiteration of the necessity to "intelligently" use the "basic principles that teach us to adapt material to the needs and the tastes of the reader" (285). Consider, for example, how Gardner tempers the "principles" of conversational style when writing to women:

> It is a generally accepted principle that since women have more time to read letters than do men, and since they act more on instinct, letters to them should be longer and should make more use of persuasion [versus argument]. This principle when applied unintelligently often results in two or three pages of ridiculous, wordy "slush," an insult to any woman's intelligence, and tedious to read. The use of persuasion and of a friendly, conversational style is very far from excluding specific, reasonable language. (285)

The conversation to farmers, another typical "special case," also requires specific attention to content and style. Gardner describes farmers as a class which "must receive individual study" because they are:

> highly critical of the evidence presented, and are able to judge of it, so that they will detect insincerity or logical shallowness. They appreciate good appearance and courteous language in letters. They are interested in discussion, and are likely to become warm partisans of one firm or another . . . . (285-286)

Traveling salesmen and dealers are the other special cases Gardner addresses and in both cases facts and "inspirational" ideas should be presented "clearly and briefly" because of the limited time these busy business people have. The element of time brings us to Gardner's focus on the presentation of the "dignified" conversation.

The Five Cs

Although Francis Weeks credits Hotchkiss (1916) for developing the Five Cs of business-letter writing (202), Gardner's 1915 text should receive credit for introducing these principles in a separate section by those names. Gardner lists "clearness, conciseness, completeness, correctness, and courtesy [as] the fundamental qualities

which the reader demands in every letter" (10). Gardner explains that "behind all these lie good reasons which can best be understood if you think first how the letter is read by the man at the desk" (10). As in Cody's text, Gardner describes each of the "fundamental qualities" in terms which emphasize the reader's needs.

Clearness Gardner argues that because the usual business letter is read rapidly and is just one of many letters, the first requirement is clearness so that there is "not a moment's doubt as to its meaning" for the reader. Clearness was also viewed as an aspect of the simple style of conversation: "Since a letter is a personal message, its total effect should be one of simplicity . . . simple wording, straightforward statements . . ." (240). Gardner advises that the letter focus on only one topic and separate ideas in each paragraph to assist the reader in glancing through the letter (10-12); and he urges the use of the commonly used words of conversation instead of formal and stilted language (67).

Conciseness Likewise, conciseness is important to "save time for the busy reader" (13). Time was also an element for the writer. Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss's texts all included discussions of the cost effectiveness of

letters in business and a part of writing letters concisely included saving money in labor and stationery (Gardner 13).

Completeness Gardner was careful to balance his discussion of conciseness with an explanation of the importance of completeness. Conciseness did not mean the kind of brevity which would sacrifice clarity or courtesy. Completeness is again related to the reader's limited time and to the courtesy of providing the reader all he needs to hear. If the letter is too short to complete the idea, Gardner argues, it will be hard to understand, and the reader's time will be taken; and if it is "so short as to omit courtesy it neglects its opportunity" (13). Gardner reminds the writer not to assume the reader will remember prior communications, so making references to past conversations is also an aspect of completeness.

Correctness Correctness is described both in terms of the writer's ethos and the importance of "economizing the reader's attention" (15). Correctness is necessary, Gardner argues, "to preserve the writer's dignity and to make the letter a worthy representative of his firm." More importantly, errors will "distract from the subject matter" and therefore interfere with the reader's understanding of the message (15).

Courtesy Courtesy is described as the "chief opportunity of the modern letter" (15). (As we have seen, though, courtesy was at the heart of the middle ages treatment of the material also.) Unlike Cody, for Gardner, courtesy is chiefly a matter of "polite phrases" that can be "perceived in rapid reading" (16). Gardner writes that unless the writer's "cordial feelings" are "translated" into words on the page, the reader will never "know how you feel." No matter how monotonous "please" and "thank you" may be, Gardner writes, the writer should remember that "the reader does not grow tired of them" (15).

What the reader might grow tired of is Gardner's cryptic presentation of the principles he saw as fundamental. Few examples are given, with the exception of a chapter of sample sales letters. In addition, each paragraph of each chapter is numbered, a practice with formalizes the presentation so much it is hard to imagine it as appealing to the reader. That may be why Hotchkiss and Drew's 1916 text replaced Gardner's at Illinois and probably at other universities which were developing business programs in response to the demand for employees trained in business communication.

George Burton Hotchkiss

The preface to the 1916 edition states that the book has been written "primarily from the business man's standpoint" because they must be the final judge of any textbook which is used in "preparing young men and women for practical everyday work in his office" (iii). The "right business attitude toward people" is described as the "backbone" for good business English. That "attitude" is the focus of Part I which states that the underlying principle for success in practice is to "always remember the other person" (2). Hotchkiss cautions that the "principles of business" should not be thought of as rules or "set formulas" because "every business, and every transaction of every business, has its own peculiarities" (3). The "backbone" for all types of letters, however, remains the same; and that is the necessity to write the message from the reader's viewpoint. Hotchkiss, like Demetrius and others before him, also differentiates between oral and written communication, and acknowledges that "you must use greater care in handling business transactions by letter" than you would in dealing with a person orally because you don't have the opportunity to "change to another line of approach" if your ideas aren't being favorably received (3).

The "you attitude" to impress

As we have seen, Cody and Gardner, saw the "you attitude" as a sincere attitude of awareness about the absent partner in the conversation and not a mere formulaic use of the "you" pronoun; and Hotchkiss continues the tradition of emphasizing awareness of the absent partner in order to shape the content and style of the message. As Cody and Gardner had done before him, Hotchkiss describes the "you attitude" in terms of an imaginary conversation with the absent partner; and thereby highlights the fundamental underlying notion that letter writing is a dialogue:

> Even though you sit alone in your office there is another person somewhere who is interested in the other side of the transaction. If you are selling, he is buying; if you are collecting money, he is paying out; if you are looking for a good position, he is looking for a good employee. Consider his side of the matter as well as your own. Write to him as you would talk to him if he were present. Then you can put into the message the ideas that will appeal to him and lead him to respond. (3)

Hotchkiss explains that the fundamental purpose of business English is profit and profit results from action, so communication in letters is to influence the actions of people, as it clearly was in the middle ages when the focus of epistolary instruction was on how one could secure good will in order to request favors. Hotchkiss's focus on action is important because, as he explains, in business messages, expressing oneself as we do in literature is not enough; the business writer must "impress" himself upon the reader, which is a matter of keeping in mind "the ideal of service in his conduct" (5).

The "golden rule" of language

Part of the writer's task of "impressing" himself upon the reader (and thus establishing ethos), was to "adjust" the language in the letter so that it would be conversational and thus personal. Meeting the reader on his level by using his language will make the impression that is likely to yield a response. Hotchkiss calls "adjust the language to the reader" the "golden rule" of business. "Stilted phrases" that wouldn't be used in personal conversation "convey nothing of the personal feeling." The language that "might be used in everyday conversation . . . [is] the true business English of to-day" (Hotchkiss, 1916, 10-11).

Hotchkiss writes that adjusting the letter to the reader is a matter of adapting "in language, in character, and in mood" (153), a reference that is clearly reminiscent of Erasmus's advice to know the audience's "nature, character, and mood" (74). This "adaptation" is also apparent in contemporary texts. When Kitty Locker (1992) includes psychographic characteristics with demographic characteristics under the heading "Ways to Analyze Your Audience" (83) she, too, is continuing the tradition Erasmus described in terms of knowing the "nature, character, and mood" of the reader. The "character" of the reader may change over time, but the writer's responsibility to, as Hotchkiss put it, "exert himself sufficiently" in learning about the audience is still required (1935, 23).

Adapting in language Hotchkiss explains that adapting the language in correspondence meant that the writer must use the language of the reader. As with Gardner, this was largely a matter of diction, as Hotchkiss explains: "No word should be used that is not in his [the reader's] vocabulary" (153). Demetrius would have approved of the "friendly" reason behind this choice. Hotchkiss explains that "the use of words that the reader habitually uses helps to put us on a friendly footing with him" (154).

Adapting to character Hotchkiss also advises the student to consider the character of the reader which may be determined "from the letter he writes, or from his business position, age, nationality, credit-rating, and a variety of other factors," including whether the reader is "conservative" or "progressive" (154). Hotchkiss points out that these things are only generalizations; like Erasmus and Cody, Hotchkiss tries to keep prescriptions to a minimum, stressing instead that the writer always seek the reader's attention.

Adapting to Mood The adjustment of mood is a matter of appealing to the emotion of the reader. A disgruntled customer would obviously not respond to the same message that would appeal to a friendly one. Hotchkiss writes that "everyone adapts his message to the mood of a friend when writing a social letter; why not in business?" (155). These adjustments may not even be conscious, "nor need they be," Hotchkiss assures the student; but it is necessary for the writer to "write to him as he would talk to him" (155).

Hotchkiss also continues the twentieth century tradition of focusing on the sales letter. Hotchkiss argues that the sales letter "is at once the most difficult and the most important type of business message" (249).

Therefore, it is important for the student to master the principles of sales letters, Hotchkiss argues, because then he should be able to handle other types of letters. The principles of adapting the reader's point of view are particularly important to the development of the sales letter in order to make the letter "distinctive and compelling" (249). Hotchkiss states that the sales letter should give "a personal and individual message to the reader . . . as personal to him as a salesman's talk would be" (250).

Appeal to various classes

In order to assist the writer in "adapting the language, tone, and substance" of his letters to the unknown customer, Hotchkiss, like Cody and Gardner, also suggests that the writer consider the qualities of a group with certain characteristics in common, but he assures the writer that the most important step is for the writer to realize that he "should always feel himself in the presence of his reader, and write to him as he might talk to him" (252). He devotes a chapter to some of "the more important groups," and in order to appreciate how he continues the process of describing the style of the letter based on "knowing" the reader, it will be helpful to examine his discussion of these groups.

Again, we are presented with the visual imaging of the reader as an invention technique. Hotchkiss explains that appealing on a personal basis to an unknown customer is a challenge that requires "visualizing" the buyer. Studying the characteristics of typical groups will help in that visualization. Hotchkiss identifies dealers, business men as consumers, professional men, farmers, and women as "typical examples." The gender and occupation scripts invoked by Cody and Gardner are continued in Hotchkiss's textbook through the 1930s.

Time and money are also still primary factors underlying content and style decisions within those groups; and as with Gardner, Hotchkiss seems to stress brevity (conciseness) as the most consistent feature for most groups. He provides the general guidelines as an introduction to each group of reader, and then provides a sample letter as an example of the principles he advocates. His explanations are certainly more detailed than Gardner's, but we can see in his explanations the continued tradition of acknowledging the reader's needs through the style of the letter.

For example, Hotchkiss writes that the dealer is interested only in profit, and the writer can be assured he will be competing with others for the dealer's attention.

Therefore, "brevity and accessibility ["illustrations, color, and other forms of display"] make them more likely to be read," but again Hotchkiss stresses that the few characteristics he offers are "to illustrate how the principle of adaptation to the reader stands above all other principles" (274).

A letter to "Business Men as Consumers" should avoid an extensive use of slang, but should have "an element of personal talk" (275). Consider the language Hotchkiss uses to describe the appeal to this reader. Frequently, Hotchkiss argues, the "journalistic and vivid appeal to him" and the letter should be "brief, snappy, and simple . . . characteristic and distinctive" (275).

Professional men, like business men, receive a good deal of mail; unlike businessmen, they "have a general contempt for the sensational and cheap" (276). They must be attracted "by means of the message in word. The difficulty of appealing to them is therefore greater than to almost any other class" (276). Hotchkiss offers advice that amounts to a detailed balancing act. Letters to doctors, lawyers, professors, and clergymen "should be short, but not curt; it should be dignified, but not stilted; it should be personal, but not effusive; and it must be in all details absolutely correct" (277). He does

offer an example letter that achieves this fine balance, the "happy medium" Cody called "tact."

Letters to farmers require facts, comparisons, proof. The language should be "simple and natural, and this demands some familiarity with the farmer's life" (279). Hotchkiss stresses that the practical element--the price and the utility of the product are the most important considerations for this reader, so to appeal to farmers as a class the writer must be "simple, direct, and colloquial" (279).

The final group Hotchkiss addresses are sales letters to women. The most important feature of letters to women, Hotchkiss argues, is "the securing of the personal element" which means "absolute courtesy and deference to the woman's point of view" (279). According to Hotchkiss, letters to women should more closely resemble social letters since women "receive less mail than men, and they are less accustomed to business matters" (280). The "nature of the talking points depends upon the social position and degree of wealth of the woman," Hotchkiss explains, but he, like Cody and Gardner, see persuasion rather than argument appropriate language to address women regardless of their "position" (280-281). Hotchkiss even goes so far as to suggest specific diction: "long words, especially those

with a refined or literary flavor, or those which come from the French" are appealing to city women; but "even with women in the country, such words as 'charming,' 'fascinating,' and the like are effective" (281). If we remember that this first text was cowritten by a woman, such advice seems particularly appalling.

Certainly the view of the emotional woman/logical man did not disappear from Hotchkiss's texts. However, his later editions indicate that the "adjustment to the reader" was subject to some limited societal changes in perceptions of women. Hotchkiss's revised 1921 version, titled Advanced Business Correspondence explains that the chief reason for different appeals to women is that "in most cases woman's activities are in a different sphere from the man's." However, he notes that "many women are to-day in business" (318-319). The appeals for women who are proprietors or dealers of stores may be the same as appeals to men, Hotchkiss explains, but letters are still adapted in tone and language because "a woman is still a woman and must receive a consideration to which she has become accustomed because she is a woman" (319).

Apparently the fear of offending a woman by being too familiar and thus "presumptuous" justified a more deferential tone and a more formal conversation in letters

to women. Hotchkiss devotes nine pages and several sample letters under the heading "Adaptation to Women in the Home." The advice is still much the same as the earlier editions: emotional appeals, attention to appearance (including the stationery on which the letter is sent), and the avoidance of argument, facts and figures are appropriate when writing to women. An "intimate and chatty style" is sometimes effective, Hotchkiss notes, if the letter is signed by a woman. He writes that "several of the large metropolitan department stores have women correspondents to compose such letters, for it is extremely difficult for a man to use the diction suitable to such letters without striking false notes" (324). Hotchkiss suggests that male writers "have some woman read your sales letter and criticize it before you send it" (325). The "completely revised" 1935 edition offers a few different sample letters, but maintains the same advice on writing to different classes. As David Carrell points out, the stereotypic views perpetuated by the professional writing textbooks continued through the 1950s (467). Our current advice to consider age, occupation, gender, etc., is the shadow of such earlier attempts to provide writers with a guide to "knowing" the reader. Hotchkiss also continued

Cody and Gardner's connection of the "you-attitude" writer-reader relationship to the Five-C treatment of the logos.

The Five Cs

Hotchkiss refers to the medium of communication as the "code" which must be easily understood by both writer and reader. He expands on this notion considerably in the 1921 edition cowritten with Edward Kilduff. In that text Hotchkiss explains that the impression left from a business letter is roughly divided into intellectual and emotional responses, so the letter needs to be "understandable and likable" (1921, 27-28). The Five Cs address both aspects. Like Cody and Gardner, Hotchkiss offers the Five Cs as the "qualities of a good letter." Decisions about the Five Cs relied on the writer's perception of the reader response. As I've pointed out before, our twentieth century ancestors saw these qualities as the planks of a bridge which span the differences between the different types of letters, so like the "you-attitude," they carefully described these qualities in relation to the reader.

As we've seen, the authors of twentieth century textbooks argued the true test of a letter's success was measured by its response. The "you attitude" was to engender a favorable response, and the Five Cs were

intended to produce a favorable response as well. Hotchkiss assures the reader that:

> the best way of determining what qualities a good letter should have, is to analyze successful letters and compare them with the unsuccessful. Careful study of several thousand letters shows different causes of favorable response, but nearly all good letters are alike in a few important respects. (155)

The "important respects" are the Five Cs which are based on the writer-reader relationship. Hotchkiss defines the qualities of a good letter as clearness, correctness, force, conciseness, courtesy, and character; and as we've seen in Cody and Erasmus before him, the characteristics of these qualities are repeatedly tied to the expected reader's response. Hotchkiss describes these qualities as "relative, not fixed," because they are dependant on how the individual reader will perceive these qualities in the letter; and "what is clear to one person may not be clear to another" (156).

Clearness Hotchkiss devoted two chapters to clearness in sentences through unity and coherence. The "cornerstone of success" for Hotchkiss was also "clear thinking" which he connects with expression. He quotes

Boileau as saying, "whatever we conceive well we express clearly, and words flow with ease" (1935, 23).

As I have mentioned before, the growth of American business during the early twentieth century led to a desire to rid letters of the courtly phrases of the last century and replace it with "natural conversational language." Hotchkiss, like Cody and Gardner focused on eliminating the stock phrases of the past. Gardner devoted a chapter to eliminating formal, stilted language; and Hotchkiss obviously agreed with Gardner that clearness was inextricably linked with avoiding set phrases that might sacrifice meaning:

> To make a strong impression upon any reader we must save his time and mental energy. We must make it easy for him to read and grasp the meaning at once, and without any possibility of misunderstanding. If this involves the sacrifice of our pet methods of expression or our recently learned phrases, these must be sacrificed. Impression is the important thing. (12)

Apparently, many textbook writers agreed with Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss since most business-writing texts today still include sections on letter planning techniques

to help writers avoid both including jargon and omitting pertinent information the reader may need.

Correctness Hotchkiss devotes four chapters on correctness and force in sentence structure and diction. As Melissa Powell points out, contemporary letter writers associate correctness with form (43). Hotchkiss, however, also connected diction (appropriate vocabulary and concrete word choice) to correctness and correctness to clearness:

> Correctness is a necessary aid to clearness, for clearness is largely a matter of the words used and the sentence structure. The words themselves must be "correct," that is, they must conform to the standards of good use established by authorities . . . . (13)

Conciseness and completeness Like Cody and Gardner, Hotchkiss connects conciseness to the business man's desire to save time and money and the reader's valuable time. He also warns that conciseness shouldn't be "confounded with mere brevity. Brevity concerns itself merely with the length of the letter; conciseness has the additional idea of completeness" (156).

Courtesy The ancient quality of polite friendliness towards the reader is also addressed by Hotchkiss who sees courtesy, like the other qualities, as "largely a matter of proper adjustment to the reader"

(157). But Hotchkiss differentiates politeness from courtesy which he says "goes much deeper." Unlike Cody, Hotchkiss argues that courtesy is "more inclusive than tact" which simply avoids offending. For Hotchkiss, courtesy was an "attitude of respect" which "presents the truth . . . from the reader's standpoint" (159). One way to achieve courtesy was to "subordinate I as much as possible and emphasize you" (159). Hotchkiss uses the term "you attitude" for the first time in his discussion of courtesy. Hotchkiss argues that "the frequent use of the word *I* is likely to make the 'you attitude' impossible, for the impression on the reader is one of egotism" (159).

Character Hotchkiss also carries on the tradition of seeing the letter as an expression of the personality of the writer. As much as courtesy requires "sympathy with the reader; character requires expression of the writer. It is the element of his own personality that shows him as a real person talking through the medium of words on paper" (160-161). In other words, it is character that makes the letter "distinctive" and Hotchkiss, like Erasmus, insists that it is impossible to express character in a letter which imitates models or that uses formulaic phrases:

> Character is impossible in a letter than imitates a model. Such a letter has no more personality

> than the typewriter on which it was written. It is equally impossible when stereotyped and hackneyed phrases (sometimes miscalled business English) are used. (161).

Hotchkiss suggests that the writer examine his sentences to see if they can be expressed "more simply and directly" because if they can, "you will find a gain in clearness as well as in character" (161).

The theories and principles discussed in these early texts have endured through the years to directly affect contemporary explanations of reader-adaptation in business letter writing style. I have tried to demonstrate that throughout letter-writing's history, the view of the letter as a carefully constructed conversation has driven the treatment of the material. In the concluding chapter I would like to briefly review the continuities in treatment of letters that we have inherited and highlight a few points of disagreement between our ancestors and our modern treatment of letter-writing.

CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters I have tried to demonstrate that epistolary instruction echoes the advice of a long rhetorical tradition which has achieved the needed flexibility in instruction by consistently treating the material in terms of a conversational writer-reader relationship. That relationship emphasizes the rhetorical triangle, reminding writers that the logos must be expressed clearly and appropriately both to establish the writer's character/credibility (ethos) and to develop an appeal to the audience's interests and needs (pathos).

The notion of letters as a carefully constructed dialogue is a positive one I believe because it allows for the pluralistic nature of letters by focusing on the variabilities of the reader-writer relationship. It also discourages the view of letters as a static product and encourages the vision of letter-writing as an ongoing process of communication.

As a part of that ongoing process of communication, I would like to conclude my essay with a brief review of the primary continuities in advice we have seen in epistolary instruction and a short discussion of some of the conflicts our examination of the past has revealed.

Continuities

I believe we have seen that our ancestors' advice has been remarkably similar in several areas. Continuities include differentiating oral from written conversation; highlighting the personal, friendly nature of letter writing; and focusing on the style of letters as an expression of both the writer's credibility and the appeal to the audience.

Oral versus written conversation I believe we have seen that it has been important to theorists since Demetrius to explain to students that the written conversation of letters was not the same as "talking." This distinction was obviously important for ancient theorists who wanted to establish letter writing as a distinct discourse form, but theorists have continued to separate letter-writing from speech because they recognized that letters could not be easily corrected or adjusted by the visual cues one receives in oral communication. By reminding students of the "special" nature of "lasting" conversation, theorists could emphasize the importance of treating the logos carefully.

The personal nature of letters I have also tried to demonstrate that Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss's "you attitude" is our most recent explication of an inheritance

begun with Demetrius's friendly "sharing of selves" in letters. Our twentieth-century ancestors saw letters as "friendly" messengers of business, not unlike their medieval counterparts. Faced with increasing bureaucratization of businesses, Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss saw the personalization of letters through the "you-attitude" and the establishment of the writer's character as critical--and ideal. We might consider how our ancestors' response could illuminate our own concerns about responding to readers' potential depersonalization fears in a growing computer age.

The style of letters Likewise, I believe our examination of the history of letter-writing advice from our ancestors demonstrates the continued focus on style in letter-writing instruction. Again, the Five-C treatment of the logos can be seen as our most recent explication of an inheritance begun with Demetrius's discussion of the plain style as the appropriate style for letters. Demetrius's explication that the style should be "adjusted to the personage to whom they are addressed" (iv. 234) is continued in the middle ages "heightening" of style in terms of the recipient, and expanded on in Erasmus's advice to vary the style according to the reader, the subject, and the occasion (Erasmus 13-15). The roots of each of the

Five Cs can be found in prior theoretical discussions of the treatment of the material. We have seen the essence of clearness, conciseness, correctness, courtesy, and completeness consistently explained in terms of establishing the writer's credibility/building ethos and appealing to the reader.

Contrasts and Conflicts

In supporting the value of traditional advice against the "folk wisdom" attacks by modern critics, I would hope that I have also shown, through my explication of a few of our more significant ancestors' texts, that our inheritance arrives not without conflict. A few issues raised in the early twentieth-century texts are particulary worth highlighting. The contrasting gender scripts, the introduction of cultural conflicts as a feature of audience analysis, the sometimes mechanistic approach to style, and the early twentieth-century "attitude" towards letters deserve some closing comments.

Gender scripts Fortunately, contemporary textbooks have not inherited the gender scripts Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss introduced. It is tempting to expect them to have "risen above" the stereotypes of the era, particularly given the fact that women were fighting for the right to vote at the time so that the role of women would have been

an issue of the period, but perhaps that is too much to ask. In any case, the remnants of stereotypical scripts continue to haunt us, perhaps because it is difficult to rhetorically analyze an unknown reader without relying on generalizations of "classes" in one form or another or perhaps because contemporary textbook authors are as guilty as their ancestors in avoiding "ground-breaking" efforts, such as highlighting gender issues in the workplace or questioning gender-biased language. Despite the continued recognition of gender-related discrimination in the workplace, most contemporary texts still relegate gender issues to passing comments on nonsexist language--and some don't even do that.

David Carrell argues that acknowledging the "strength and resilience of gender stereotypes" is an important part of finding "effective ways to counteract them" (467). Obviously, the view of logical men/emotional women shows incredible resilience. If nothing else, these texts should remind us that gender issues in communication need our continued attention.

Cultural conflicts In addition to the gender stereotypes we have inherited, we have consistently "signaled our cultural insularity" by virtually ignoring international audiences in our discussions of the "you

attitude" (see Stevenson). Despite Cody's stereotypical descriptions of different nationalities, he does raise an important consideration that is absent in Gardner, Hotchkiss, and most of our contemporary texts--the possible implications of an international context for letter-writing. We've heard a great deal lately about the global nature of business; yet most of our textbooks (Kitty Locker's text is an exception) don't explore the implications of writing to international readers whose cultural norms may be significantly different from our own. Cody was at least wise enough to recognize that our discussions of audience need to be expanded to encompass the global business community.

In addition, today we should include in audience concerns our own nonnative students of business communication. Dwight Stevenson argues that our research on audience analysis is incomplete because we have consistently treated business discourse as written by and for native English-speakers (319). He points out that in our nation's technical communication programs "the nonnative student population is very substantial (in many programs it exceeds 50%) and that among professionals around the world, English technical discourse is used as the international language of business and technology"

(319-320). If, as Stevenson argues, English discourse is the "esperanto" of business communication, a discussion of the "you" that is nonnative should be addressed in our business correspondence instruction.

Mechanistic approach Probably the most consistent complaint in our assessment of business correspondence inheritance has centered on the tendency to approach style in a formulaic manner. Certainly modern critics view the formularies as too mechanistic in their "how-to" advice.

In modern texts it is obviously still difficult to balance the desire to give useful advice for adjusting the style to the audience with the desire to avoid providing pedantic lists of style "tips." Such a balancing act seems to yield contrasts in advice and presentation. For example, we saw that Gardner's style, which included numbering each paragraph and offering no sample letters, makes his text more formal and "stilted" at a time when the "stilted" style in writing was the primary target for his, and his contemporaries, attacks. We saw that admonitions against the "stilted" phrases of politeness consistently appear in Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss's text. Yet Hotchkiss recommends specific diction for several audiences, particularly when addressing women, at the same

time that he encourages writers to personalize their writing style and avoid stock language.

Attitudes towards letters All the texts I have examined assumed the importance of letters deserved theoretical attention, but I believe the language used by the authors of the texts from the early twentieth century provides an interesting contrast in approach to letters that we do not see in contemporary texts. Obviously, Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss no longer saw the letter in the noble terms ancient rhetoricians used. They don't describe "ideal" letters in terms of the embodiment of good character as did Demetrius, but the early twentieth-century authors' attitude toward letters revealed in the language of their texts indicates, if not a conflicting approach to modern perceptions of letters, at least a different assessment of letter-writing as a product and as a process. The early twentieth-century texts use language we rarely see attached to business writing today, words like: distinctive, compelling, beautiful, and interesting; and they repeatedly describe the necessary qualities of the good business writer in terms of "enthusiasm" and "imagination."

For Cody, Gardner, Hotchkiss--and for Erasmus and Demetrius before them--the essential qualities of the

carefully constructed dialogue were not mere platitudes. The "you attitude" which envisioned the absent partner and expressed respect for that partner through the Five Cs were the qualities of a "well-developed business imagination" (Cody, 1921, 177). Cody, Gardner, and Hotchkiss saw expression--clarity, accuracy, courtesy, and the rest--as a way of thinking, an attitude, a mind set. The kind of "English that bites into the minds and hearts of men" Cody argues, "is more a matter of the thought than of the expression. If you think clearly and accurately, and develop a good supply of enthusiasm by means of the imagination, you will express yourself with great force" (Human Nature 177).

If we are to instruct our students on how to write "with great force," how to write the kind of "English that bites into the minds and hearts of men," we might do well to more carefully analyze the past rather than to abandon the accumulated wisdom of the ages as mere "platitudes." A change in attitude toward the possibilities of learning from the past will be necessary, however, particularly when it comes to attention to correspondence.

The traditional lore about letters may have been devalued for the same reason Harold Rosen argues narrative is assumed to be "scarcely worth possessing"; and that is

because it is "common currency, a popular possession" (25). But it is precisely because letters are such common possessions of business, precisely because we have come to take for granted the traditional lore we have inherited, that we should seriously reexamine our own prejudices against the "folk wisdom" of our ancestors.

I would hope that a recognition of the strength and resilience of our rhetorical inheritance in correspondence would underscore the value of that inheritance. Carter Daniel argues that "shining a flashlight into corners of history always illuminates the present too" (12). At least illuminating our perception of the past has been my intent in this essay. I would hope that a continued study of the past will enrich our knowledge of the essential nature of the present art of letter writing instruction.

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